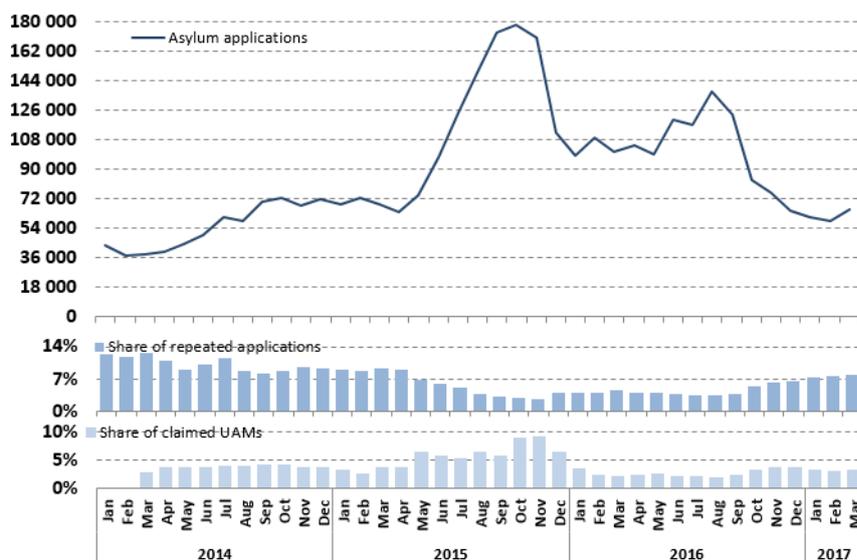


Latest asylum trends – March 2017

Number of applications for international protection in the EU+¹

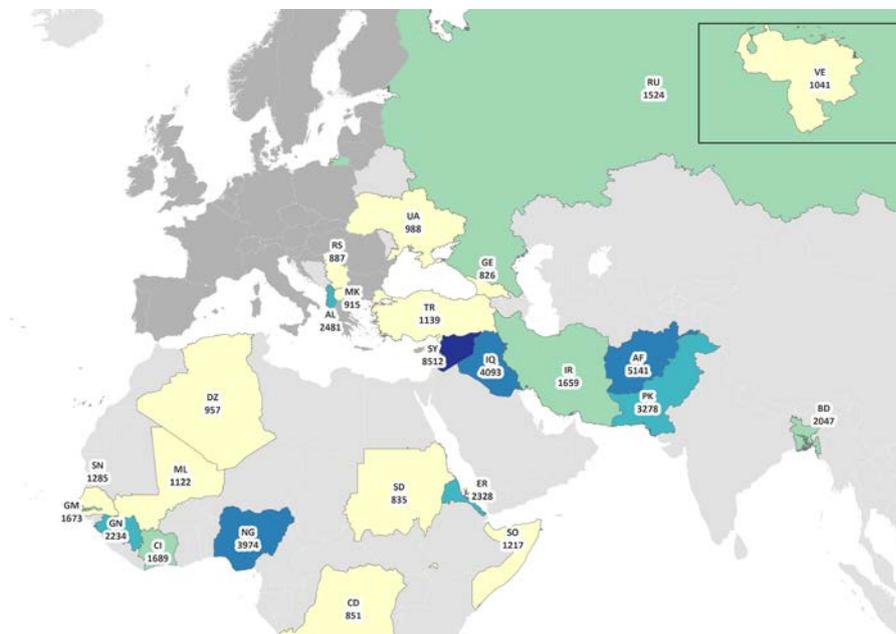
In March, EU+ countries recorded 66 908 applications for international protection.² This marked the first monthly increase since August 2016.



Compared to February 2017, the number of applications rose by 14 %.

8 % of these applicants had already lodged a claim in the same EU+ country (repeated applications). **3 % of all applicants claimed to be unaccompanied minors (UAMs)**³ when lodging an application. The largest share of UAM applicants were, as before, accounted for by Afghan citizens (13 % of the EU+ figure), closely followed by Gambian citizens (11 %).

Main countries of origin of applicants



In March, the top-three citizenships of origin of applicants was composed of **Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq**, the same composition as registered between April 2016 and October 2016. Nigeria, which since November 2016 alternated between being fourth, second and third citizenship of origin, again dropped to the fourth position in March 2017.

These top-three citizenships together accounted for 27 % of all applications lodged in the EU+. The share of Nigerian applicants in the EU+ was 6%, the same as the share of Iraqi

applicants. The list of the 10 most frequent citizenships of origin was completed by Pakistan, Albania, Eritrea, Guinea, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire. With the exception of Eritrean and Nigerian applicants, which each decreased by 3 % compared to February, all top 10 citizenships recorded higher numbers of applicants. The sharpest increase was seen for Albanian applicants: + 42 %.

¹The EU+ is composed of EU28 plus Norway and Switzerland. The share of repeated applicants is the proportion of repeated applicants in the total number of applicants for international protection.

²Information on asylum applications were available for 26 EU+ countries. Weekly estimates were used for Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Malta.

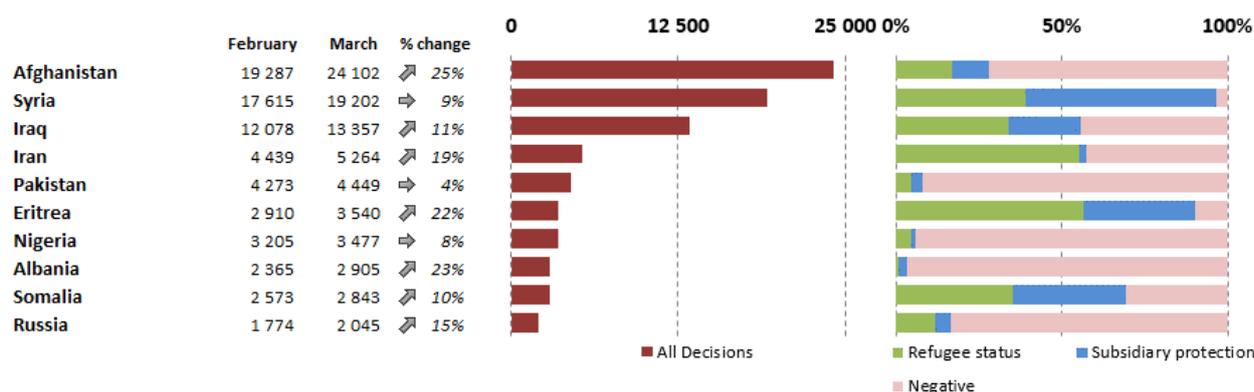
³The share of claimed UAMs represents the proportion of asylum applicants claiming to be below the age of 18 years in the total number of applicants rather than those assessed to be such after an age assessment has been carried out. Several EU+ countries have difficulties reporting on claimed UAMs in the framework of the EPS, these figures should therefore be considered as underestimations of the actual proportion of claimed UAMs.

Syria – Syria has been the main citizenship of origin of applicants in the EU+ since April 2015. In March 2017, 8 512 Syrian applications were recorded, 8 % more than in February, but still among the lowest monthly totals reported since the beginning of 2014. Syrian nationals only represented 13 % of all applicants in the EU+ in March 2017, whereas in the same month of 2016 they represented more than one in three applicants. Syrian applicants remained widespread throughout the EU+ with 20 out of 26 reporting countries counting Syrian nationals among their top-three citizenships of applicants.

Afghanistan – 5 141 Afghan citizens lodged an application for international protection in the EU+ in March 2017. This was 27 % more than in February, when the volume of Afghan applications registered was at its lowest since the migration and asylum crisis started. Following six consecutive months of decreases, and a drop of 18 % to 4 044 applications in February 2017, Afghanistan became the third instead of the second main citizenship of origin – for the first time since April 2016. Afghanistan remained the main citizenship of claimed UAMs (13 %). 12 out of 26 EU+ reporting countries had Afghan applicants in their national top-three citizenships.

Iraq – The number of Iraqi applicants in the EU+ in March 2017 was 4 093, a 4 % increase compared to February 2017. In combination with the decrease of Nigerian applicants registered this month, this rise was sufficient for Iraq to again become the third most common citizenship of origin of applicants in the EU+. As for the other citizenships, the number of applications lodged by Iraqi citizens in March 2017 represented only about one-third of the applications lodged in the same month one year ago. Iraqi nationals were in the top-three citizenships of origin in 10 out of 26 EU+ countries.

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



The number of first-instance decisions issued increased significantly: from 96 656 in February 2017 to more than 110 000 in March 2017.⁴ This was a 14 % increase reflecting a stepped-up decision-making capacity in the majority of the reporting countries. **The EU+ recognition rate remained at the same level of 43 %**, with an increase in decisions issued to all main citizenships, including those with both low and high EU+ recognition rates. The highest increase in decisions issued was observed for Afghan applicants with a EU+ recognition rate of 28 %, for Albanian applicants with an EU+ recognition rate of 3 %, and for Eritrean applicants with a EU+ recognition rate of 90 %. Similar to previous months, more positive decisions led to refugee status (56 % of all positive decisions) than subsidiary protection (44 %). 22 % of all EU+ first-instance decisions were granted to **Afghan** applicants (24 102), followed by **Syrians** (19 202 decisions and 17 % of the EU+ total). The recognition rate for Afghan nationals (28 %) was one percentage point lower than in February, while for Syrian applicants it increased by one percentage point to 97 %. 12 % of all decisions were issued to **Iraqi** applicants, out of which 56 % led to protection in the form of refugee status or subsidiary protection.

Cases awaiting a first-instance decision

While in September 2016 the number of pending cases exceeded 1.05 million, by the end of March it decreased to 709 405 cases. Compared to February, this was an 8 % decrease or 64 000 fewer cases pending in first-instance. This decrease was made possible through the issuance of more first-instance decisions, and despite a month-to-month increase in applications lodged.⁴ 61 % of all cases were pending for longer than six months.

⁴ Data on these indicators were not available for Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta.