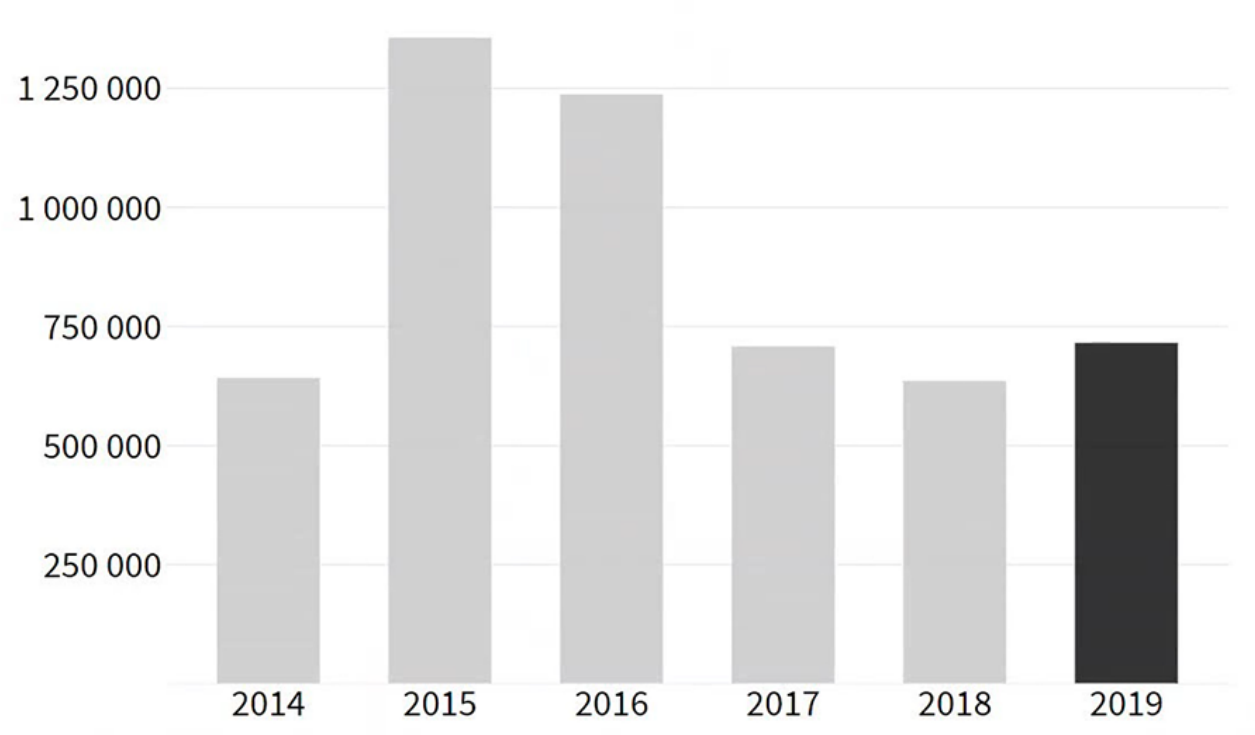
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Asylum applications in the EU increase by 13% in 2019



For the first time since 2015, applications increased from the previous year. The increase was not largely driven by irregular migration, but rather by applications from countries with visa-free access to Schengen.

More than **714 000 applications were lodged** in the EU+ in 2019, up by 13% from 2018, when fewer than 635 000 were registered. This is the first time since 2015 that there have been more applications than the previous year, and occurred despite reduced irregular migration towards the European Union.

This initial information was released by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on 26 February 2020 in a **public summary.** Commenting on the release, EASO's Executive Director, **Nina Gregori**, stated: " *Today's figures highlight that while we remain well below the situation of a few years ago, we need to continue to be vigilant and strengthen our asylum practices. A sustainable, fair and crisis-proof asylum system in the European Union is needed. To further feed into this process, on 26 June EASO will release its Annual Report, which will provide a more detailed picture of the state of the EU's asylum system, as well as where it is heading."*

The **top three countries of origin** of applicants were Syria (about 72 000), Afghanistan (60 000) and Venezuela (45 000). Afghans sought asylum in far larger numbers than a year earlier, as did Venezuelans, who lodged more than twice as many applications (approximately 22 000 applications in 2018).

Most of the increase is accounted for by the **large number of applications lodged by applicants who are exempt of visa requirements** when entering the Schengen Area, which explains why applications for international protection have increased but detections of illegal entry at the external border have decreased. Such visa-free applicants were mostly from Latin America and included, beside Venezuelans, nationals of Colombia, El Salvador and Honduras.

Fewer positive decisions on applications for international protection

The EU+ recognition rate in 2019 stood at 33% meaning that about one in three decisions granted EU-regulated forms of protection. Syrian (85%), Yemeni (82%) and Eritrean (81%) nationals had the highest recognition rates, whereas the number of positive decisions for visa-free nationals was generally extremely low.

Examples of the low recognition rate for visa-exempt applicants were seen among Western-Balkan citizenships, ranging from 1% for North Macedonians to 6% for Albanians. Recognition rates for Venezuelans (at 5%) and Colombians (at 7%) were also low.

At the end of November 2019, there were more than 900 000 cases pending a final decision in the EU+. Most of these cases were with first-instance asylum authorities (as opposed to with the judiciary in appeal). At the end of the year, more than 540 000 applications were awaiting a first-instance decision, up by 20% from a year earlier.

For more information and an interactive data-visualisation, please visit the **Latest Asylum Trends** page.

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu.

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