

As restrictions are eased, asylum applications in the EU+ increase significantly, but remain at half pre-COVID-19 levels

Following the gradual relaxation of emergency measures in EU+ countries,¹ in June about half as many applications for international protection were lodged compared to the months immediately prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in Europe.

The impact of emergency measures on asylum trends continued to be visible in June. Although the **31 500 applications in June represented a threefold increase from May**, this number was still at about half the level prior to the pandemic. In fact, almost all EU+ countries received fewer applications in June than in the first two months of the year. In the first half of 2020 the overall number of asylum applications dropped by 37 % compared to the same period in 2019.

In the coming months, applications for asylum are expected to continue rising but albeit slowly because asylum services are likely to remain partially limited plus travel restrictions with third countries will continue to reduce entry opportunities, especially in the event of a second wave.

Repeated applications are those that are lodged by applicants in the same country following a previous application that was rejected or discontinued. In June, the share of repeated applications decreased slightly (11 %) but remained higher than pre-COVID-19 levels (8 – 9 %).

Syrians and **Afghans** continued to lodge the most asylum applications, followed by **Venezuelans** and **Colombians** who suddenly started to lodge more applications after two months of very low levels indeed.

For the fourth successive month, first instance decision making exceeded the number of applications that were lodged: in June, over 34 300 first-instance decisions were issued, somewhat more than in May which demonstrates that many asylum services have been able to continue issuing decisions despite this year's challenges. Indeed, decision making has been rather less affected by the emergency measures in EU+ countries, but the temporary suspension of face-to-face interviews for some time seems to have prevented a more sizeable increase in decisions.

In turn, the number of pending cases at first instance continued to decrease slightly for the fourth month in a row. However, with some 426 700 applications awaiting a decision at first instance at the end of June, the number of pending cases remained significant.

For more information and an interactive data-visualisation, please visit the [Latest Asylum Trends](#) page.

[1] Includes European Union Member States, Norway, and Switzerland.

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela](#)



On 29 June 2020, the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2020/898[1].

The Council Decision adds eleven persons to the list of natural and legal persons, entities and bodies subject to restrictive measures in Annex I to Decision (CFSP) 2017/2074.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania[2], the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this Council Decision.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

[1] Published on 29.06.2020 in the Official Journal of the European Union L 205I/6.

[2] The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

[Engage our youth to shape Europe's](#)

future



Political participation in our modern democracies helps ensure that policies and measures necessary to implement human rights commitments enjoy the support of society.

But findings of [FRA's recent Fundamental Rights Survey](#) signal a lack of political participation among young people.

They consistently attach a lower level of importance than older age groups to traditional forms of politics.

For example, under 60% of young people aged 16-29 consider freedom of opposition parties to criticise the government of high importance compared with about 70% of people aged 54 or older.

As one young German woman told FRA: "Everybody always says that we can't change anything anyways, but it is at least a small start to go to vote, I mean how many youths don't go to vote at all anymore. And then they ultimately get upset about the ones who are still there."

Such sentiment underlines the need to promote the full participation of young people in political, social and economic life. This is vital for a pluralistic, democratic and fundamental rights-based future of our societies.

The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, the framework for EU youth policy cooperation, already acknowledges this. It seeks to foster the participation of young people in democratic life while also supporting their social and civic engagement.

One way to do this is to [harmonising across the EU the minimum age](#) to vote or stand as a candidate in elections, or to take part in youth councils – aligned with the principles set out in the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights concerning citizens' rights (Articles 39 and 40). Currently, for example, only three Member States give 16 or 17-year-olds the right to vote in any election.

The youth-led #FridaysForFuture movement against climate change also offers hope.

The EU and its Member States should build on such initiatives taking note of how political engagement among young is evolving.

Europe needs new ways of engaging, involving and communicating effectively with its youth. International Youth Day is a good place to start.

[Let's unleash youth potential](#)



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News stories

The aspirations of young people around the world need to be at the core of our political, social and economic development debate. Protecting and fighting for youths' equal rights, particularly in developing regions, contributes to a fairer and more sustainable development. On the International Youth Day, the EU highlights the importance of giving voice to the young people and empowering them to better address the challenges of the future.

[Belarus: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the](#)



On 9 August, Presidential elections took place in the Republic of Belarus.

The EU has been following the developments leading to the presidential elections closely. During the electoral campaign, the people of Belarus have demonstrated the desire for democratic change.

However, the elections were neither free nor fair.

State authorities deployed disproportionate and unacceptable violence causing at least one death and many injuries. Thousands of people were detained and the crackdown on freedoms of assembly, media and expression intensified. We call on the Belarusian authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all detained. Furthermore, credible reports of domestic observers show that the electoral process did not meet the international standards expected of an OSCE participating State.

The people of Belarus deserve better.

Since the 2015 release of political prisoners, the relationship between the EU and Belarus had improved. But without progress on human rights and the rule of law, the EU-Belarus relationship can only get worse.

It is against this background that we will be assessing the Belarusian authorities' actions to address the current situation and conducting an in-depth review of the EU's relations with Belarus. This may include, inter alia, taking measures against those responsible for the observed violence, unjustified arrests, and falsification of election results.

We call on Belarusian political leadership to initiate a genuine and inclusive dialogue with broader society to avoid further violence. The EU

will continue to support a democratic, independent, sovereign, prosperous and stable Belarus.