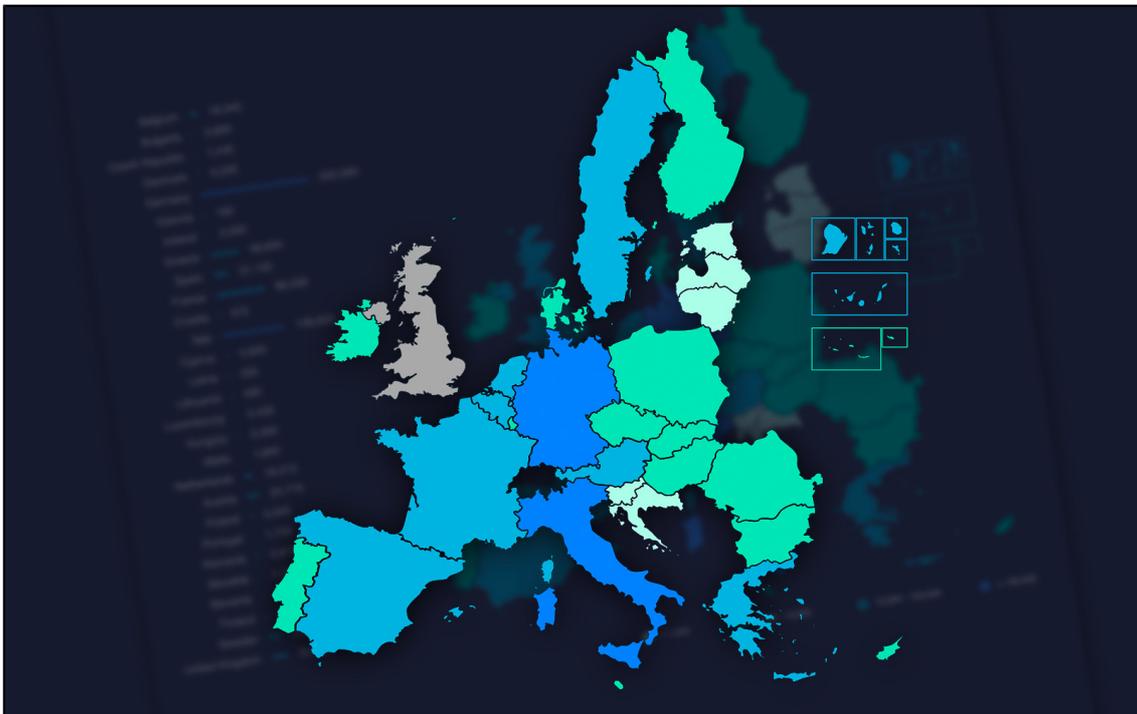European Parliament

Asylum and migration in the EU: facts and figures

Migration in the EU has been affected by crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic and Russian hostilities in Ukraine.

Check out the latest figures in our infographic

Infographic on migration in Europe: click on the image above to launch the interactive infographic

Restrictions put in place because of the coronavirus pandemic led to a reduction in migration, but numbers started rising again in 2021. Recent increases are due in part to Russia's war in Ukraine. Climate change could also have an impact in the future.

The flaws in the EU's asylum system exposed by the arrival of more than one million asylum seekers and migrants in 2015 remain. In September 2020, the European Commission presented the Asylum and Migration Pact and Parliament has been working on proposals to create a fairer, more effective European asylum policy. In April 2023, Parliament approved its

position on the pact and is now ready to start negotiations with the Council.

Read on to find all the relevant data about migration in Europe, who migrants are and what the EU is doing to get to grips with the situation, and what financial implications there have been.

Learn more about how the EU manages migration

Definitions: what is a refugee? What is an asylum seeker?

Asylum seekers are people who make a formal request for asylum in another country because they fear their life is at risk in their home country. Currently, people from outside the EU must apply for protection in the first EU country they enter. Filing a claim means that they become **asylum applicants** or asylum seekers. They receive refugee status or a different form of international protection only once a positive decision has been made by national authorities.

Refugees are people with a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, politics or membership of a particular social group who have been accepted and recognised as such in their host country. In the EU, the qualification directive sets guidelines for assigning international protection to those who need it. In March 2022, Parliament backed the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time since it entered into force in 2001 to grant immediate protection to people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Find out more about the causes of migration

Asylum applications and decisions in the EU

In 2022, there were just under one million (965,665) applications for asylum in the EU, 52.1% more than in 2021 and the highest level since 2016. At the height of the 2015-2016 migration crisis, the number of applicants hit 1,221,690.

The number of first-time asylum applicants in the EU in 2022 was 881,220, an increase of 64% from the year before (537 355). A first-time applicant for international protection is a person who lodged an application for asylum for the first time in a given EU country. This **excludes repeat applicants** in that country.

The countries that saw the largest relative increases of first-time applicants in 2022 were Ireland (+421.8%), Croatia (+367.9%) and Austria (+181.4%). The country that registered the most first-time applicants in 2022 was Germany, which accounted for 24.7% of all first-time asylum

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applicants in the EU. It was followed by France (15.6 %), Spain (13.2%) and Austria (12.1%). The lowest numbers of first-time asylum applicants were observed in Hungary (45 applicants), Slovakia (500) and Latvia (545).

Syrians, Afghans, Venezuelans and Turks lodged the most applications for asylum – together accounting for almost 40% of all first-time asylum applicants. The number of first-time asylum applicants from Syria increased from just under 100,000 in 2021 to 131,970 the following year. They accounted for 15% of the total, down from 18.4% in 2021. Afghans made up 12.9 % of the EU total. Applicants from Venezuela and Türkiye each represented almost 6%, with 50,050 (5.7 %) and 49 720 (5.6%) applications, respectively.

EU countries approved a total of 384,245 applications in 2022, up 40% compared with 2021. Some 44% were granted refugee status (up 22% from 2021), 31% subsidiary protection (up 48%), and 25% humanitarian protection (up. 72%).

The war in Ukraine caused a new influx of migrants into Europe

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has resulted in millions of people being forced to flee their homes. There have been over 20 million border crossings from Ukraine since the start of the war, according to UNHCR, the United Nations' refugee agency. Germany and Poland have welcomed the largest number of Ukranian refugees.

Since 4 March 2022, Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion were granted temporary protection after the EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive. This is an exceptional measure in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced people from non-EU countries who are unable to return to their country of origin.

Irregular border crossings and migrant deaths en route to Europe

In 2015 and 2016, at the peak of the migration crisis, more than 2.3 million irregular crossings were detected. The total number of illegal crossings in 2022 was 330,000, the highest level since 2016. The number of detected crossings increased on all the irregular migration routes. The Central Mediterranean crossing remains the deadliest of all four migration routes to Europe, with about 1,400 people reported dead or missing in 2022.

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EU funding for migration

Migration has been an EU priority for years. Several measures have been taken to manage migration flows as well as to improve the asylum system.

The EU significantly increased its funding for migration, asylum and integration policies in the wake of the increased inflow of asylum seekers in 2015. €22.7 billion is reserved for migration and border management in the EU's budget for 2021-2027, compared with €10 billion for migration and asylum in 2014-2020.

Refugees around the world

Around the world, the number of people fleeing persecution, conflict and violence has reached 108.4 million. Children account for 40% of the world's refugee population.

The countries hosting the largest number of refugees are Türkiye, Iran, Colombia, Germany and Pakistan. 76% of the world's refugee population are hosted in low- and middle-income countries.

Check out UNHCR figures on the number of refugees in EU countries

Briefings
The migration issue
More facts and figures on migration in Europe
The European Commission's New Pact on Migration and Asylum

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