

Asylum Seekers in Europe

Mar 2017

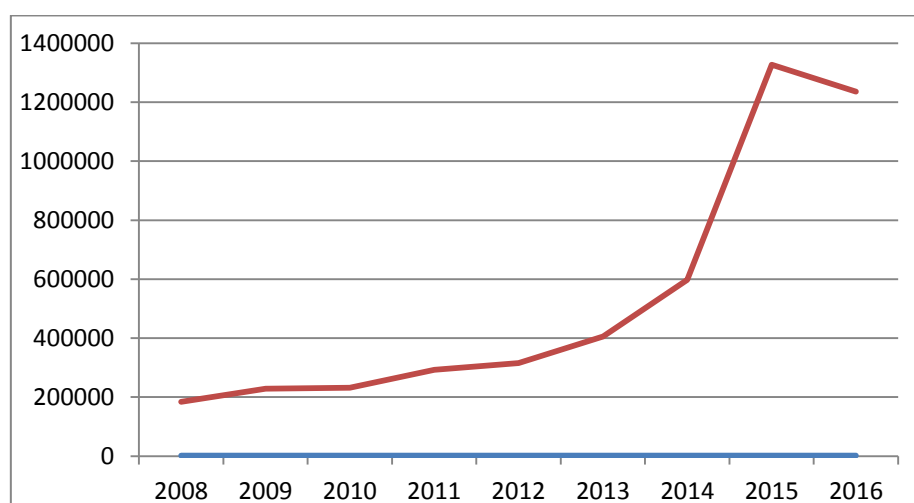
The main source of data covering Europe as a whole is the Eurostat database. Eurostat depends on statistics supplied by the equivalent of the Home Office in each country. The countries covered are the EU28, plus Norway and Switzerland.

The number of asylum seekers in Europe has increased in recent years with a particularly large increase in 2015. The table and chart below show the total number of first time applications in each year since 2008 as reported by Eurostat. Eurostat also publishes figures described as the total number of applications, which includes fresh claims as well as first time applications, and may also have some double counting as a result of applicants who having made an application in one country being removed to another country under the Dublin Regulation, and then making a claim in that country. The trends for these two sets of figures are similar.

The total number of first time applications for 2016 was about 7% lower than the 2015 figure.

First Time Applications

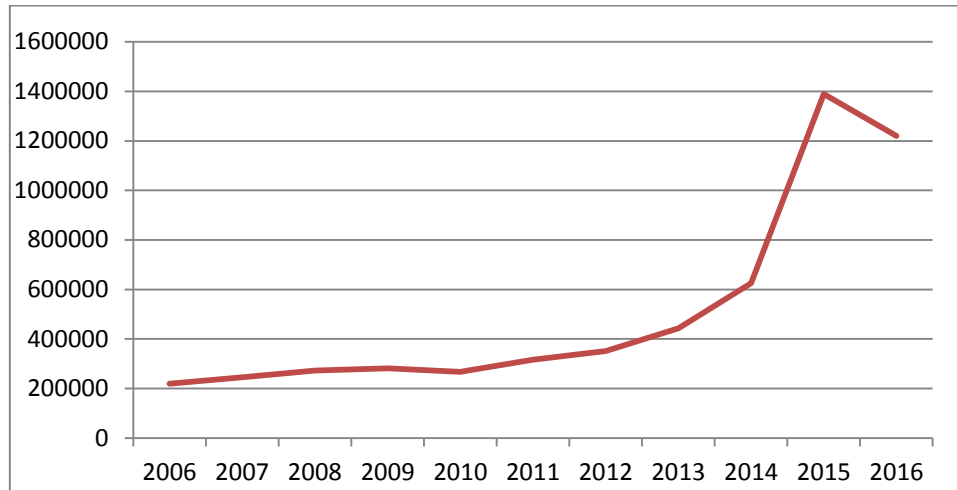
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
182,040	226,725	229,570	290,910	313,265	403,600	595,530	1,325,560	1,233,340



The Home Office also publishes statistics for the number of asylum applications in Europe. For some countries these are sourced from the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees, and for others from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They differ from the Eurostat figures by a few percentage points. Generally the Home Office figures have been higher than the figure for first time applications quoted by Eurostat, but lower than the total number of applications quoted by Eurostat, although in 2015 and 2016 the Home Office figure was lower than both Eurostat

figures. The differences are almost certainly due to differences in the methodology of collection of the data.

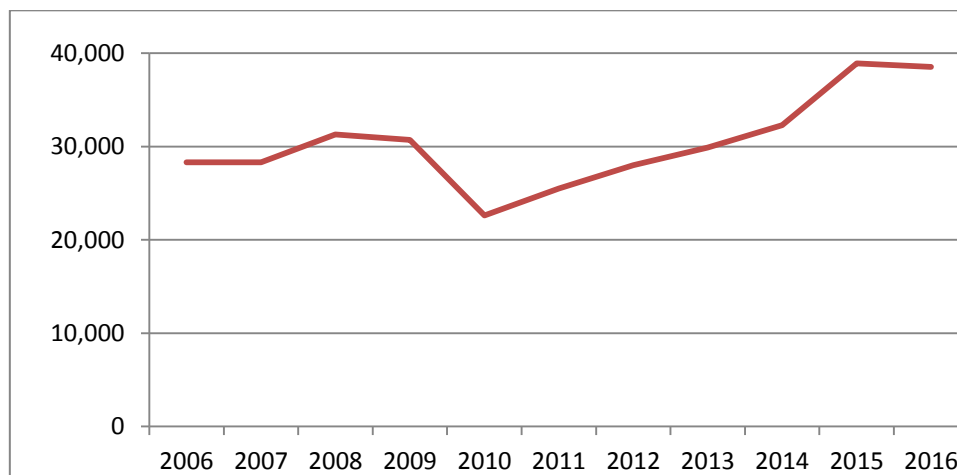
The chart below shows the trend in applications according to the Home Office statistics and it is obviously more or less identical to the trend shown by the Eurostat data.



UK Figures

The numbers of asylum applications have increased in the UK, but not as steeply as in Europe as a whole. The table and chart below use Home Office statistics. These figures include dependants.

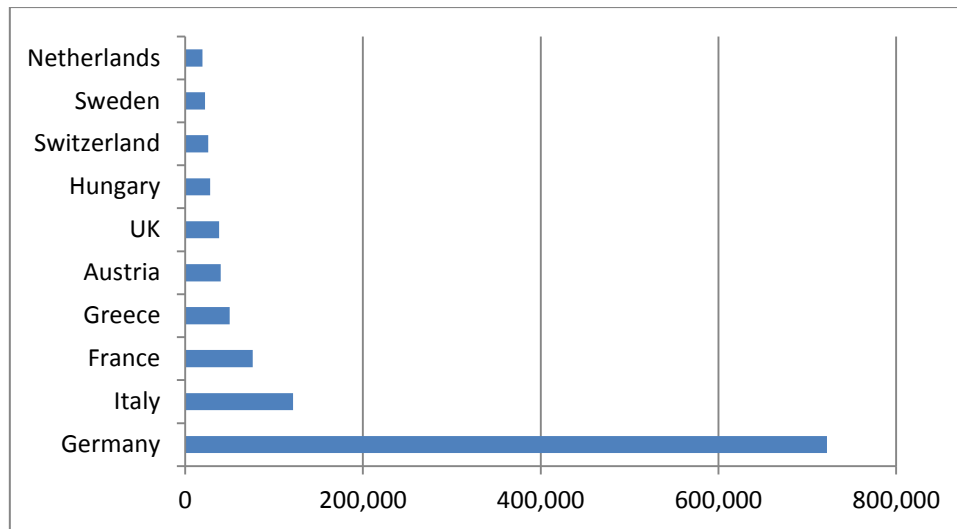
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
31,313	30,673	22,644	25,898	27,978	29,875	32,344	39,968	38,517



In 2016 the UK was 5th in Europe in terms of the number of first time asylum applications. However this appears to be because of a fall in the number of applications in some other countries rather than a rise in the number of applications in the UK. In Hungary, for example, the number of applications fell from over 175,000 in 2015 to just over 28,000 in 2016.

Germany had easily the highest figure at more than 18 times the figure for the UK. Both Sweden and Hungary, with much smaller populations than the UK, had proportionally more applications.

The chart below compares the Eurostat data for the top ten countries for first time applications in 2016.



In terms of the number of asylum seekers per 1000 population in 2016 the Europe average was about 2.4. The corresponding figure for the UK was 0.6. This compares with 8.4 for Germany, 4.8 for Austria, 4.5 for Malta, 3.6 for Greece, and 3.3 for Hungary. There were 18 countries in Europe with a higher figure than the UK. All these figures related to population are taken from Home Office statistics.

If the number of applications is looked at in relation to each country's GDP, again the UK is well below the Europe average. Of the 10 countries in the table above only Germany has a higher nominal GDP than the UK, and Hungary, Sweden, Austria, Netherlands, and Switzerland have a considerably lower GDP.

Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum

Eurostat data shows that there was a significant increase in applications from unaccompanied children in 2015 compared with earlier years. The data for 2016 is as yet incomplete and will become available later in 2017.

From 2008 to 2013 the annual total for Europe as a whole (EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland) varied between 11,465 and 14,435. However in 2014 it was 23,150 and in 2015 the total recorded was 96,465.

Sweden alone reported 35,250 applications in 2015, more than a third of the total. Germany reported 22,255 applications, Hungary reported 8,805, Norway reported 5,050, and Italy reported 4,070. For the UK the figure increased from 1,945 in 2014 to 3,255 in 2015.

Countries of Origin of Asylum Seekers

In 2015 there were large increases in applications from several countries of origin compared with 2014, but the numbers stabilised in 2016 for the main countries of origin. The figures for first time applications for the EU28 for the five countries of origin with the largest number of first time applications in 2016 are shown in the table below.

Country	2015	2016
Syria	377,960	334,820
Afghanistan	192,940	182,985
Iraq	126,755	126,955
Pakistan	46,520	47,595
Nigeria	30,025	46,145

The corresponding figures for the UK in 2016 were:

Country	2015	2016
Syria	2,539	1,409
Afghanistan	2,261	2,341
Iraq	2,216	2,666
Pakistan	2,470	2,857
Nigeria	917	1,140

Iran was the country of origin for the largest number of asylum applicants in the UK in 2016 with 4,192 applications.

Decisions

Decisions made during 2016 do not necessarily relate to applications made during that year. In fact fewer decisions were made than applications during 2016. Across Europe (EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland) a total of 1,148,370 initial decisions were made in 2016, compared with 1,233,340 first time applications.

The table below shows the decisions for the top 10 countries in terms of initial decisions made. A positive decision means a decision to grant refugee status, or humanitarian protection, or a subsidiary protection status.

Country	Decisions	% Refugee	% Positive	% Rejected
Germany	631,085	40.6	68.8	31.1
Sweden	95,540	17.7	69.4	30.6
Italy	89,875	5.3	39.4	60.6
France	87,775	21.1	33.2	66.8
Austria	42,415	58.2	71.6	28.4
UK	30,915	27.2	32.1	67.9
Netherlands	28,875	33.7	72.1	27.9
Belgium	24,960	47.1	60.3	39.7
Switzerland	22,580	25.9	58.4	41.6
Finland	20,750	20.8	34.1	66.0

It is clear that some countries are much more likely than others to grant humanitarian or subsidiary protection than others. Italy, for example, stands out as very low in terms of grants of refugee status but then has a significant increase when all positive decisions are counted. No detail is available describing the type of positive decision described, other than refugee status or humanitarian protection.

In 2016 across Europe as a whole 33% of decisions were to grant refugee status and 61% were positive.

Notes

Detailed figures for the UK can be found in Refugee Council briefings on asylum statistics, dealing with quarterly figures and annual trends.

The Eurostat data is as published in March 2017 and may be subject to later revision.

The most recent Home Office statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2016/asylum>

Eurostat data can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?node_code=tps00191

More information about asylum systems in Europe can be found in the Asylum Information Database:

<http://www.asylumineurope.org/>

Further international data can be found in UN High Commissioner for Refugees publications, especially the annual Global Trends, the most recent of which covered 2015.

<http://www.unhcr.org.uk/>

About the Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is one of the leading organisations in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. We give help and support to asylum seekers and refugees, and also work with them to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed by decision-makers.