

Asylum Seekers in Europe

November 2019

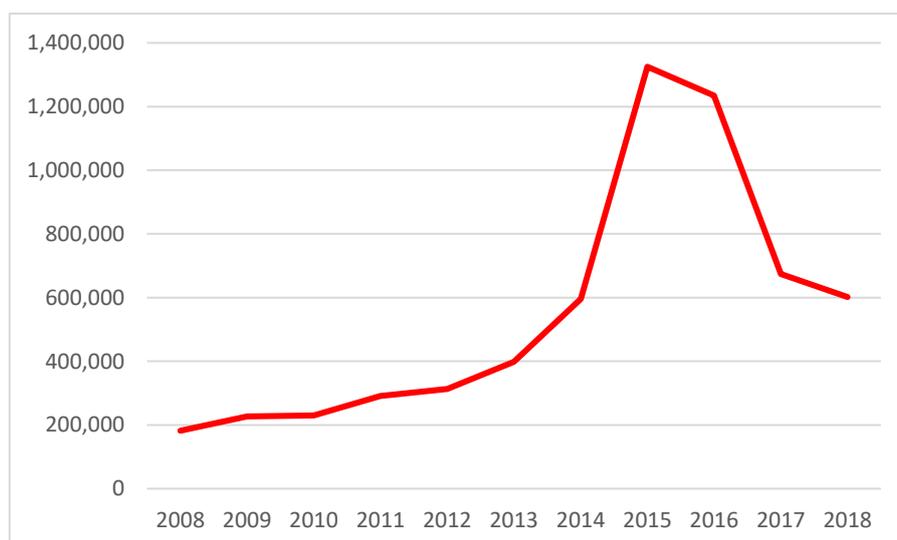
The main source of data covering Europe as a whole is the Eurostat database. Eurostat depends on statistics supplied by the equivalent of the Home Office in each country.

The number of asylum seekers in Europe has increased in recent years with a particularly large increase in 2015 but numbers fell quite sharply in 2017 and by a smaller amount in 2018. The table and chart below show the total number of first time applications in each year since 2010 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 made a claim in that country. The trends for these two sets of figures are similar.

The total number of first time applications for 2017 was 45% lower than the 2016 figure.

First Time Applications

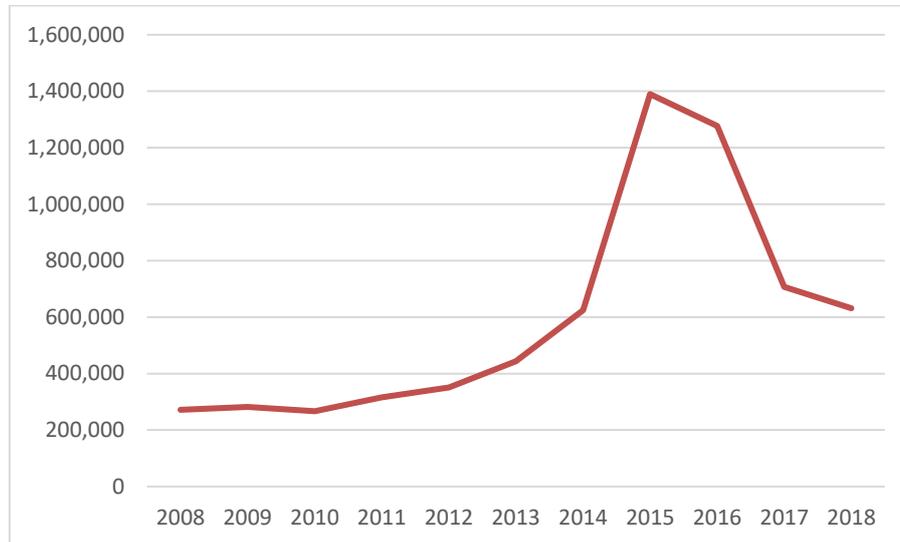
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
229,570	290,885	313,265	398,570	595,530	1,325,140	1,235,105	674,575	602,045



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.

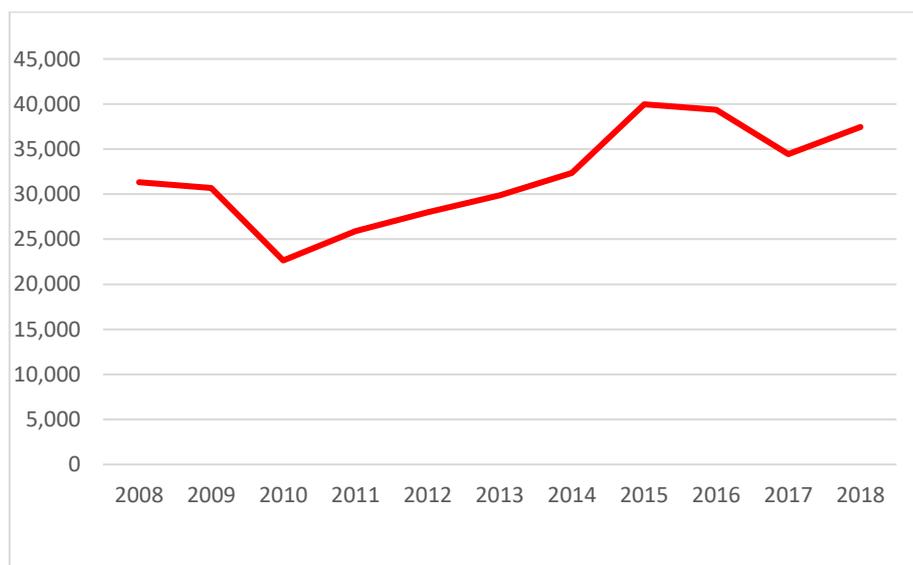
The chart below shows the trend in applications according to the Home Office statistics and it is obviously more or less identical to the trend shown by the Eurostat data.



UK Figures

The numbers of asylum applications 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.

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
22,644	25,898	27,978	29,875	32,344	39,968	39,357	34,435	37,453

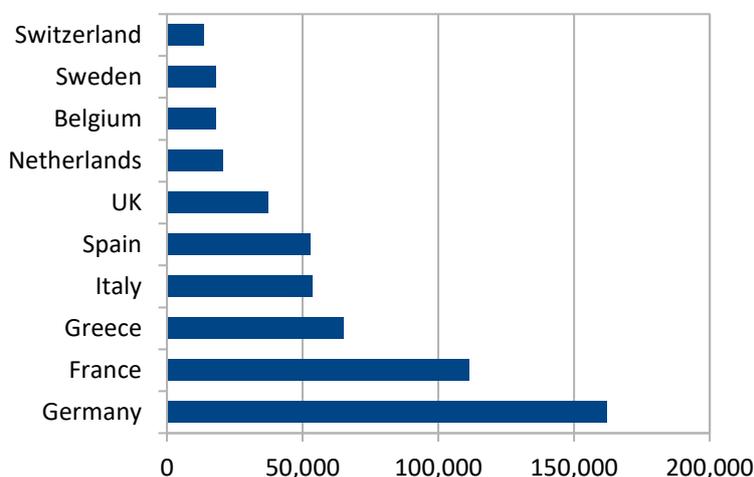


The Home Office figures which include details about dependants are published in August each year.

In 2018 the UK was 5th in Europe in terms of the number of first time asylum applications. This was the same as in 2017 and 2016.

Germany had the highest figure at more than 4 times the figure for the UK. Some countries, such as Sweden, with a smaller population than the UK, had proportionally more applications

The chart below compares the Eurostat data for the top ten countries for first time applications in 2018.



In terms of the number of asylum seekers per 1000 population in 2018 the Europe average was 1.21. The corresponding figure for the UK was 0.57. This compares with 6.35 for Greece, 5.00 for Malta, and 2.17 for Sweden. There were 17 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 average across Europe. Of the 10 countries in the table above only Germany has a higher nominal GDP than the UK, and 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 but the numbers have fallen more recently.

From 2008 to 2013 the annual total for Europe as a whole (EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland) varied between 11,466 and 14,425. However in 2014 it was 24,865, and in 2015 the total was 102,665. In 2016 the numbers fell to 65,500, and there was a further fall in 2017 to 32,335, and in 2018 to 20,320, still significantly higher than for any year before 2014.

Sweden alone reported 34,295 applications in 2015, more than a third of the total. Germany reported 22,255 applications. In 2016 Germany reported 35,935 applications, more than half the total but reported 9,085 in 2017. For the UK the figure increased from 1,945 in 2014 to 3,255 in 2015 but then fell to 3,175 in 2016 and to 2,205 in 2017 before rising again to 2,870 in 2018. The country reporting the highest figure in 2018 was Germany with 4,085 applications.

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 and decreased significantly in 2017. The figures for first time applications for the EU28 for the five countries of origin with the largest number of first time applications in 2018 are shown in the table below. In 2017 Nigeria was 4th in the list and Iran was 8th.

Country	2017	2018
Syria	102,375	80,940
Afghanistan	43,800	41,055
Iraq	47,650	39,825
Pakistan	29,670	24,845
Iran	17,325	23,235

The corresponding figures for the UK were:

Country	2017	2018
Syria	604	720
Afghanistan	1,326	1,349
Iraq	2,379	2,697
Pakistan	2,495	2,022
Iran	2,570	3,327

Iran was the country of origin for the largest number of asylum applicants in the UK in 2018.

Decisions

Decisions made during 2018 do not necessarily relate to applications made during that year. Across Europe (EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland) a total of 601,085 initial decisions were made in 2018, compared with 602,045 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, humanitarian protection, or a subsidiary protection status.

Country	Decisions	% Refugee	% Positive	% Rejected
Germany	179,110	23.1	42.4	57.6
France	115,045	18.4	28.4	71.6
Italy	95,210	6.8	32.2	67.8
Austria	34,525	30.8	43.5	56.5
Greece	32,340	39.1	47.0	53.0
Sweden	31,335	19.1	34.0	66.0
UK	28,860	26.5	35.0	65.0
Belgium	19,020	41.3	50.9	49.1
Switzerland	17,000	36.4	89.6	10.4
Spain	11,875	4.8	24.4	75.6

It is clear that some countries are much more likely than others to grant humanitarian or subsidiary protection than others. Italy and Spain, for example, stand out as very low in terms of grants of refugee

status but then have an increase when all positive decisions are counted, though still relatively low overall. A positive decision means refugee status, humanitarian protection, or some other form of subsidiary protection.

In 2018 across Europe as a whole 21% of decisions were to grant refugee status and 37% 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 May 2018 and may be subject to later revision.

The most recent Home Office statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2019>

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 2017.

<http://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf>

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.