

## Asylum Seekers in Europe

May 2018

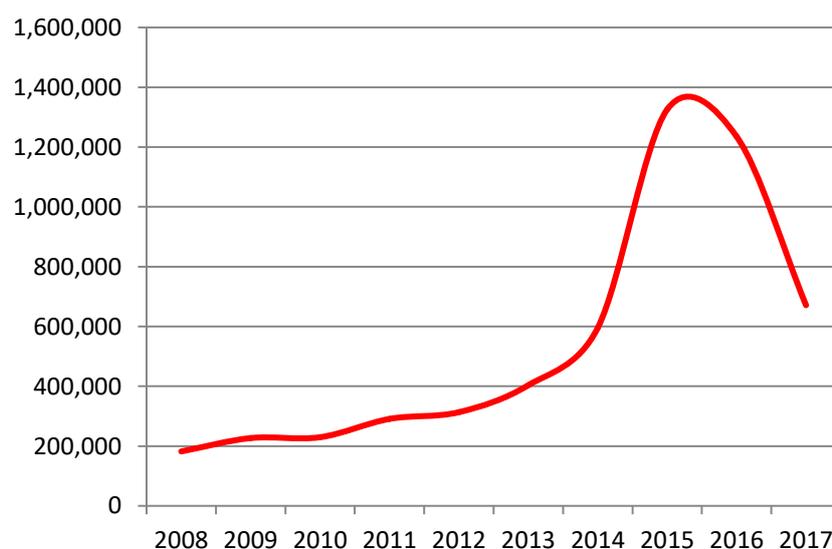
The main source of data covering Europe as a whole is the Eurostat database. Eurostat depends on statistics supplied by the equivalent of the Home Office in each country. The countries covered are the EU28, plus Norway and Switzerland.

The number of asylum seekers in Europe has increased in recent years with a particularly large increase in 2015 but numbers fell quite sharply in 2017. 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 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*

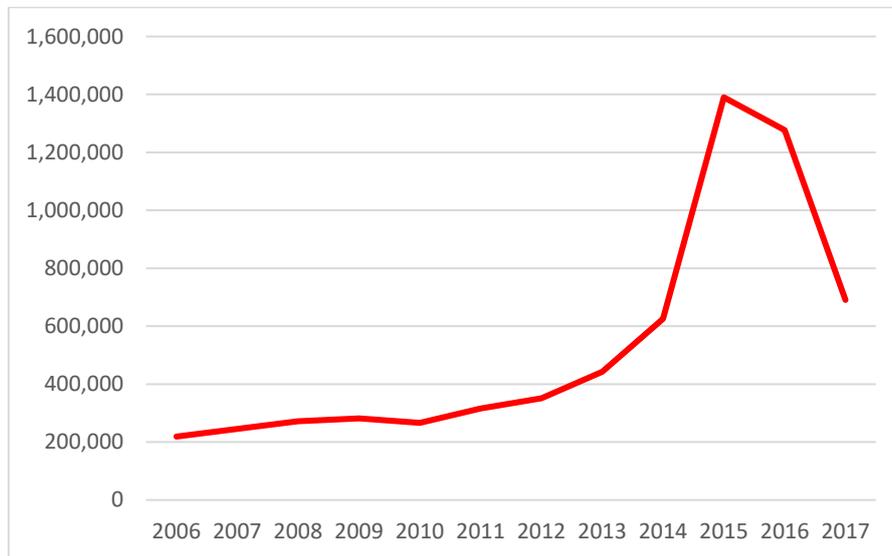
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
226,725	229,570	290,910	313,265	403,600	595,530	1,325,560	1,235,180	670,935



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.

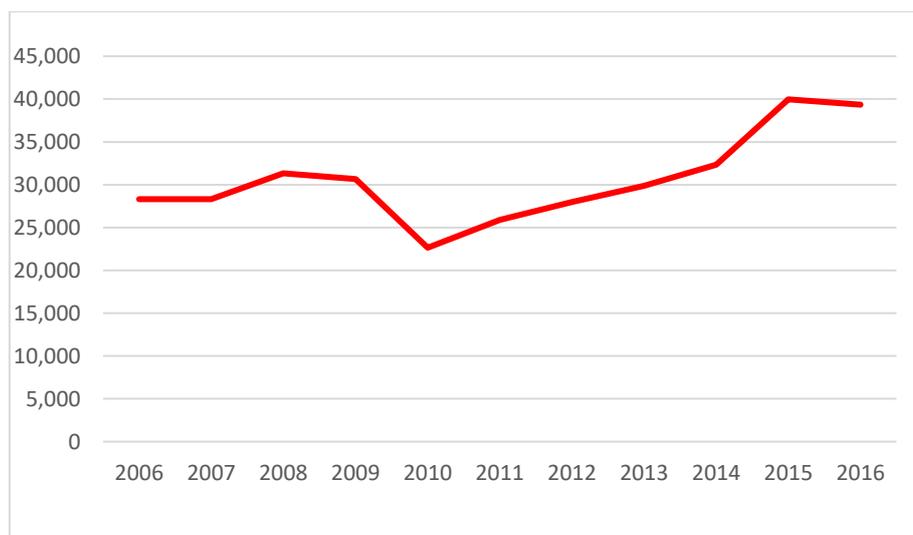
The chart below shows the trend in applications according to the Home Office statistics and it is obviously more or less identical to the trend shown by the Eurostat data.



### 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	2017
31,313	30,673	22,644	25,898	27,978	29,875	32,344	39,968	39,357	33,520

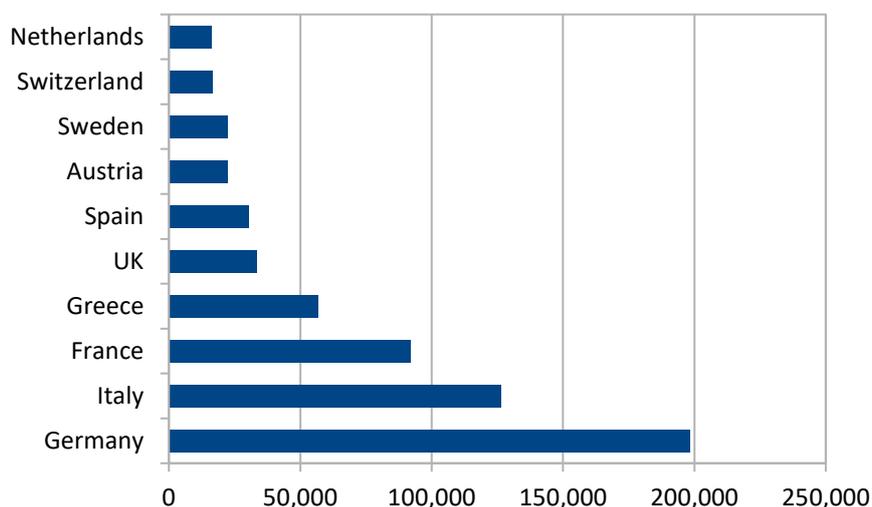


The Home Office figures including dependants are published in August each year.

In 2017 the UK was 5<sup>th</sup> in Europe in terms of the number of first time asylum applications. This was the same as in 2016.

Germany had easily the highest figure at almost 6 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 2017.



In terms of the number of asylum seekers per 1000 population in 2017 the Europe average was 1.14. The corresponding figure for the UK was 0.51. This compares with 2.40 for Germany, 4.49 for Greece, 4.00 for Malta, and 2.53 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 Europe average. 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, still significantly higher than for any year before 2015.

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. The country reporting the highest figure in 2017 was Italy with 10,005 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 2017 are shown in the table below. The same five countries headed the list in 2016.

Country	2016	2017
Syria	377,485	105,355
Iraq	128,620	48,350
Afghanistan	186,545	45,090
Nigeria	47,385	39,815
Pakistan	47,855	29,870

The corresponding figures for the UK were:

Country	2016	2017
Syria	1,376	617
Iraq	2,672	2,366
Afghanistan	2,329	1,312
Nigeria	1,158	1,018
Pakistan	2,870	2,483

Iran was the country of origin for the largest number of asylum applicants in the UK in 2017 with 2,569 applications.

## Decisions

Decisions made during 2017 do not necessarily relate to applications made during that year. In fact more decisions were made than applications during 2017. Across Europe (EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland) a total of 996,255 initial decisions were made in 2017, compared with 670,935 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	524,185	23.6	49.9	50.1
France	110,945	17.1	29.4	70.6
Italy	78,235	7.5	40.6	59.4
Sweden	61,065	21.8	43.8	56.2
Austria	56,285	37.9	53.3	46.7
UK	27,770	26.9	30.8	69.2
Greece	24,510	38.4	42.7	57.3
Belgium	24,045	40.2	52.3	47.7
Switzerland	16,225	38.5	90.0	10.0
Netherlands	15,945	19.0	49.0	51.0

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 2017 across Europe as a whole 23% of decisions were to grant refugee status and 46% 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-march-2018-data-tables>

Eurostat data can be found at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?node\\_code=tps00191](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 2016.

<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.