

Public summary Migration Radar Q1 2018

Numbers and distribution of (first) asylum applications in the Netherlands and the EU+

The total number of first asylum applications in the Netherlands in the first quarter of 2018 is higher than in the same period of the previous year (+13.1%). Also compared to the last quarter of 2017 the number of first asylum applications has risen (+7%). Most asylum applications were submitted by Syrians (14%), Eritreans (9%) and Algerians (7%).

Compared to 2017 the number of asylum applications from Syrians in the Netherlands increased in the first quarter of 2018 (+27%). The number of applications from Syrians decreased somewhat in the first quarter of 2018 compared to the previous quarter (-6%). The high number of asylum applications from Syrians is mainly caused by the continuing armed conflicts in Syria.

The number of first asylum applications from Eritreans increased in the first quarter of 2018 compared to the previous quarter (+82%). Compared to the previous year the number remained approximately the same (-2%). In the first quarter of 2018 49 per cent of all first asylum applications of the Eritrean nationality originates from unaccompanied minor foreign nationals (UMFNs).

A striking aspect is the increase of the number of first asylum applications by Moldovans in the Netherlands. The number of first asylum applications from Moldovans in the first quarter of 2018 has increased compared to the first quarter of 2017 (+528%), and compared to the previous quarter (+115%). But the number of first asylum applications from this group remained more or less equal to the third quarter of 2017.

In the first quarter of 2018, just as in 2017, Moroccans and Algerians were the largest groups of asylum seekers from safe countries of origin that submitted a first asylum application in the Netherlands.

The number of unaccompanied minor foreign nationals (UMFNs) in the asylum procedure in the first quarter of 2018 has increased somewhat compared to the three previous months (+5%). The absolute numbers of asylum applications from UMFNs are low. UMFNs are mainly Eritreans (53%), Syrians (11%) and Moroccans (9%).

In the fourth quarter of 2017 the Netherlands submitted a Dublin claim to other EU Member States especially for Algerians, Moroccans and Eritreans. Germany, Italy and Spain were the top three countries on which the Netherlands laid a Dublin Claim in the first quarter of 2018.

In comparison to the same period in 2017, less asylum applications were submitted in the EU+ in December 2017 and January 2018. Most asylum applications were submitted in Germany, France and Italy. Austria registered the largest increase in the number of asylum applications. Spain, Italy, Greece and Germany, on the other hand, registered a decrease of the number of asylum applications. Syrians, Iraqi and Afghans formed the largest groups of nationalities that applied for asylum in the EU+.

Countries of origin, reception and transit

In Syria many new cases of displacement occurred due to fights between the government army and rebels in East Ghouta and Idlib and due to fights between the Turkish and the Kurdish army in Afrin. In Iraq the number of displaced persons decreased and more people returned to their places of residence. A fluctuating situation of violence, however, caused a potential new flow of refugees and displaced persons. Also in Afghanistan an increased number of violent incidents caused many new displaced persons.

In Iran new protests against the government occurred and riots associated with these protests caused dozens of deaths. As a result of restored flight connections between Iran and Serbia, combined with a visa-free regime, many Iranians travelled to Belgrade of whom many applied for asylum. Dozens of them travelled on to Europe. Some of them applied for asylum in the Netherlands at the end of 2017. In the first quarter of 2018 no new cases of asylum applications from Iranians via this new route have been registered.

By instituting a transit visa for Cubans on Schiphol, the number of asylum applications by Cubans in the Netherlands was reduced to nil with effect from February 2018. In Georgia the government has announced a package of measures to stem the increased irregular migration of Georgians to the EU.

In Morocco unrest related to the Rif protests and the collective legal action against Rif demonstrators caused an opening for more departures of African migrants from the Moroccan coasts in the direction of Europe. Frontex also expects a further increase of the number of irregular migrants along the Western Mediterranean route.

The Lebanese government alleged that it would not force Syrians to return after unrest had arisen due to rumours about the possible forced return of Syrians. The Turkish government announced that it intended to send back Syrians in due course to inter alia Afrin. The number of Syrians in Turkey is still increasing.

In Libya the number of displaced persons is decreasing, but the number of refugees keeps on rising. Since the end of 2017 UNHCR has been evacuating vulnerable refugees to third countries, among others Niger and Italy.

Routes

The total number of irregular border crossings on the Mediterranean routes has decreased for the third year in a row.

The number of border crossings on the Central Mediterranean route has decreased. But to date Libya does remain the country from where the largest group of migrants departs in the direction of Italy. The decrease of the number of illegal border crossings on the Central Mediterranean route is also the result of arrangements that have been made between the Italian government and various parties in Libya (government and militia) and the ensuing measures taken. However, there is an increase of the number of Eritreans on this route.

The number of irregular border crossings on the Eastern Mediterranean route by sea has decreased compared to the last quarter. The number of arrivals by land did on the other hand increase on this route. This usually concerns Turkish migrants. The past few months show a rather constant increase on the Eastern Mediterranean route compared to last year.

On the Western Mediterranean route a decrease of the number of irregular arrivals by sea has taken place. Most irregular border crossings of migrants on this route occur by land. The use of the air route of West Africans flying to Casablanca has continued unabated in the past few months.

The number of irregular border crossings on the Balkan route has increased. In the past six months a shift from the Western corridor to the Balkan Route has occurred.

Asylum policy and measures

During the informal meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 25 and 26 January 2018 the ministers of the EU Member States that were present discussed the prioritization of the discussion of the Dublin Regulation which must lead to a political agreement being reached in the Council at the latest in June 2018. This should also result in a quicker completion of the review of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

The Dutch government has presented a comprehensive migration agenda. The Dutch government will make the migration policy future-proof by choosing for a broad, integrated approach from now on. By means of a 'six pillar agenda' in which the policy intentions from the coalition agreement are interconnected, the government wants to respond to the dynamic, multifaceted and complex issue that migration is.