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## EU ASYLUM APPLICATIONS FALL TO PRE-2015 LEVELS

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Deutsche Welle (14 March 2019)

The number of first-time asylum applications in the European Union has fallen to 580,845, Eurostat has reported. At the height of the migrant movements into Europe in 2015, asylum applications exceeded 1.2 million.

European Union states received 580,845 first-time asylum applications in 2018, about half the number received during the 2015 migrant crisis, the EU's statistics agency reported Thursday.

The 2018 figure marks an 11 percent fall from 2017.

The number of pending asylum applications in the EU totaled 878,600 at the end of 2018, down slightly from 927,000 a year earlier.

The findings confirm a downward trend of people entering the EU through irregular crossings. The EU border and coast guard agency Frontex estimated around 150,000 people made this type of voyage in 2018, the lowest number in five years.

The number of asylum applications drastically increased in 2015 and 2016, when conflicts in Syria and other Middle Eastern nations escalated and caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee.

At the peak of the migrant movements, the number of first-time asylum-seekers in the EU exceeded 1.2 million. It was Europe's biggest spike in migration since World War II.

The countries of origin for first-time asylum-seekers in the EU in 2018 were:

Syria with 80,920 applications  
Afghanistan 40,990 applications  
Iraq 39,595 applications

Together, the three nations accounted for almost 30 percent of the total number of people claiming asylum in Europe in 2018.

[Infografik Anzahl der Asyl-Neuanträge nach Herkunftsländern EN]

Germany remains prime destination

In percentage terms, the migrants' destinations in 2018 were:

Germany — 27.9 percent of migrants  
France — 19 percent

Greece — 11.2 percent

Spain — 9.1 percent

Italy — 8.5 percent

Rome, which now has an anti-immigrant party sharing power in a coalition government, recorded the biggest drop in applications last year.

Some politicians and judges in Germany have complained that asylum applications are not made in their first EU state of entry. "Neither European nor national asylum law works. The whole system is dysfunctional," said Dusseldorf Administrative Court President Andreas Heusch earlier this month.

"We do not even manage to return asylum-seekers in the border town of Niederkrüchten just a few kilometers to the Netherlands or to Belgium within six months," Heusch said. "Our decisions are without consequences."

### **Lowest application rates**

Both Hungary and Poland currently have right-wing, populist parties in government, and Hungary has taken a hard-line approach to migration and asylum. They stood out with the lowest number of asylum applications per million residents in 2018:

EU-wide average was 1,133 applicants per million population

Hungary received 65 applicants per million population

Poland received 63 applicants per million population

### **Anything but home**

More than 240,000 people have been killed in Syria's conflict since it broke out in 2011, and millions have been forced to flee their homes. In a desperate move, many of them decide to catch trains, walk and even pay human smugglers to leave Syria for Europe. In this photo, Syrians conduct search and rescue operations after government forces staged an attack on residential areas in Damascus.

law/jm (dpa, Reuters)

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Kaynak/Source: