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Statistically correct asylum data: prospects and limitations

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Introduction¹

The subject of asylum seekers, traditionally of interest only to national and international refugee agencies, a handful of human rights lawyers and refugee advocates, has recently caught the attention of population statisticians and migration scholars. Significantly, the Revised UN Recommendations on International Migration Statistics² devote, for the first time, explicit attention to refugees and asylum seekers.

This paper considers the issue of asylum statistics in Europe. The first part summarizes UNHCR's role in the collection of asylum statistics, highlighting the organization's experience in implementing the UN recommendations. The second part uses period-based asylum statistics to illustrate recent trends in asylum migration in Europe. In part three of the paper, the availability and usefulness of period-based statistics are considered by examining the various measures and indicators available to study the asylum process. A comparison is made between a period- and cohort-based analysis, using data from the United Kingdom. The paper concludes that while cohort-based data may provide some valuable insights in the asylum procedure, period-based information remains essential to monitor current international trends.

The international framework

Since its creation in 1950, UNHCR has collected, used and reported statistics on asylum seekers, refugees and other people of concern to the organization. Indeed, UNHCR's Statute recognizes the key role of statistics: "The High Commissioner shall provide for the protection of refugees falling under the competence of his Office by... obtaining from Governments information concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories..."³

Coming under increased pressure to provide accurate and timely refugee figures, in the early 1990s UNHCR established a unit with specific responsibility for the collection, compilation, reporting and analysis of statistics.⁴ Since that time, the statistical function within UNHCR has been progressively professionalized by means of improved guidelines and training. The number of statistical publications produced by UNHCR has also risen sharply in recent years.⁵

UNHCR offices are located in more than 120 countries around the world and employ some 5,000 staff. Through its day-to-day contacts with official bodies as well as with the refugees themselves, UNHCR is in a unique position to collect and verify asylum and refugee statistics. In many developing countries, UNHCR is involved in refugee registration at the request of Governments. The UNHCR statistics are based on Government records for most industrialized countries, whereas UNHCR field offices

¹ This paper was originally presented at the Joint ECE-EUROSTAT work session on Migration Statistics, Geneva, 8-10 May 2000.

² Statistics Division, United Nations, New York, 1998, *Statistical Papers Series M*, No. 58, Rev. 1.

³ Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Chapter II, Paragraph 8, General Assembly Resolution 428(V) of 14 December 1950.

⁴ For further discussion of UNHCR statistics, see: Jeff Crisp, "Who has counted the refugees? UNHCR and the politics of numbers", *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 12, June 1999.

⁵ Most statistical publications are available on <<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics>>.

are the source of much of the data from developing countries. Since 1950, UNHCR has compiled global refugee statistics. Since 1994, the Office has issued an annual statistical report.

The revised UN recommendations on international migration statistics

In 1998, the Statistics Division of the United Secretariat published the revised UN recommendations on international migration statistics. Recognizing the numerical importance of asylum flows during the 1990s, the 1998 Recommendations, unlike its predecessor, cover asylum and refugee statistics. UNHCR has been an important contributor to the chapter on asylum statistics.

UNHCR's most recent Statistical Overview⁶ mirrors much of what is proposed in the UN Recommendations (see for instance page 78 of the Recommendations). The 1998 Overview provides detailed information on the number of applications, the type of decision (positive, negative, otherwise closed), pending cases and recognition rates by detailed origin for more than 130 asylum countries. Furthermore, it contains longitudinal (10-year) information on asylum for most industrialized countries. Whereas data on asylum applications, type of decision and recognition rates are available for virtually all asylum countries, the coverage of pending cases is less.

The UN recommendations also suggest distinguishing between first instance and appeal procedures. This distinction was systematically introduced during the 1999 round of UNHCR's global data collection. The 1999 draft tables have a column stating "Type" which indicates (a) the actor responsible for the status determination process (Government or UNHCR) and (b) the administrative level of the procedure. It is expected that the coverage of this latter information will improve in following years.

UNHCR's 1999 draft tables contain four columns of recognition rates. Whereas the 1998 Statistical Overview used only one denominator (the total number of asylum decisions), the 1999 draft tables uses two (total number of asylum decisions and total number of substantive decisions). The last two columns of the 1999 standard tabulation ("Excl. o/w cl.") show the Convention and total recognition rates based on the UN Recommendation, that is, a period indicator based on the number of substantive decisions.

Data elements suggested in the UN Recommendations but which prove more difficult to obtain are:

- A systematic breakdown between the number of cases and persons by type of decision (UN Recommendations, table 10 through 13);
- A systematic breakdown between "newly arrived" and "from within country" by type of decision (UN Recommendations, table 12);

⁶ *Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR*, 1998 Statistical Overview, Geneva, July 1999 (<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics>).

- Information on “stay of deportation”. Information on rejected cases, which are granted stay of deportation, is obviously highly relevant. After all, asylum-seekers whose formal claim for refugee status have been denied may still not be able to return to their own country for refugee-like reasons. From the perspective of UNHCR, what matters it is not so much the granting of official refugee status, but whether any person in need of protection is not sent back against his or her own will. The most fundamental principle in international refugee protection is not the granting of asylum (there is no such right), but protection against “non-refoulement”. Although the data on rejected cases that are not deported are thus highly relevant, few countries produce such reports. And if they do, the extremely short-term nature of process (a removal may be postponed for 1 or 3 months for instance), makes any international comparison less feasible.

As more detail is being collected on asylum procedures, the differences between national procedures become more apparent. One of such differences is the way in which asylum claims are dealt with which have no chance in the actual determination process (“manifestly unfounded claims”). Whereas some countries reject such cases during a pre-screening process (Belgium and Canada for instance), other countries (e.g. United Kingdom) distinguish refusals in those after a full hearing and those on the basis of formal grounds. Clearly, these different asylum processes have a significant effect on some indicators. In the case of Belgium and Canada, does the number of applications concern those submitted to the eligibility procedure or only those which were given a full hearing? Nevertheless, calculating recognition rates on the basis of the number of substantive decisions only, as recommended by the UN, has the advantage that the rates are not “polluted” by formal rejections made either during the pre-screening or at the level of the actual determination process.

Information on the gender and age of asylum-seekers and refugees, as proposed by the UN Recommendations, has become increasingly available in UNHCR statistical publications.⁷ Whereas prior to 1999, the gender and age was only collected on refugees directly assisted by UNHCR, since 1999 the coverage has been extended to asylum-seekers, refugees and all other groups of concern to UNHCR. Consequently, the coverage of gender and age on asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe has significantly improved in 1999. As noted elsewhere, however, one of the main constraints in providing a genuinely comprehensive coverage of gender and age remains the inability of many industrialized countries to provide this information from their registration systems.

⁷ See for instance, *Statistics and Registration: A Progress Report*, Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, dated 7 February 2000 (EC/50/SC/CRP.10), (<<http://www.unhcr.org/excom>>).

Using asylum statistics during emergencies: the Kosovo crisis

The 1999 Kosovo refugee crisis provides an excellent framework to consider the relevance and use of asylum statistics. In which indicators were policy makers most interested in and what was feasible to provide? Not surprisingly, the indicator drawing most attention was the number of new applications submitted. In addition to reporting on *prima facie* refugee arrivals in countries in the region, UNHCR started a monthly reporting system on Kosovar asylum applications covering some 24 European countries, a system that was subsequently expanded to cover all nationalities on a monthly basis.⁸ Weekly asylum applications, however, appeared not feasible.

On several occasions, tables were prepared showing not only applications, but also decisions and pending cases concerning Kosovar asylum-seekers. The number of pending cases appeared an extremely useful indicator as it showed that most Governments, overwhelmed by the number of Kosovar asylum applications, were not able to determine most claims in a speedy fashion. The asylum-seeker stock estimate of pending cases has at least two more advantages. First, it provides a directly comparable indicator to the *prima facie* refugee stock in the countries neighbouring Kosovo. Second, the information is much more easily understood by the general public as it provides an answer to the question “How many Kosovar asylum-seekers are there?” Unfortunately, only a few countries were able to report regularly on the number of FRY applications pending in the procedure.

One of the main data limitations during the Kosovo crisis was origin. As most asylum countries record only the nationality (country of citizenship) of the applicant, few countries were able to distinguish Kosovar asylum-seekers from other citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Although UNHCR was able to estimate the number of Kosovar applications among the total number of FRY asylum-seekers submitted during the Kosovo crisis (almost 90%), information on the province of previous residence (Kosovo) as well on the “ethnic origin” (Kosovar) would have in fact been required. Whereas citizenship is generally a sufficient proxy for origin, the Kosovo crisis showed the need for more detail. (The same applies for other groups such as Kurds and gypsies). In view of the increased emphasis European states put on “internal flight alternative”, i.e. the possibility to find refuge within the country of origin in areas considered “safe”, the importance of sub-national information on origin is likely to increase.

A second problem was related to the actual asylum decision process. Most Kosovars whose claims were adjudicated were provided short-term residence status on the basis of humanitarian grounds. The short-term nature of some of these decisions lead to the situation that some cases, which had received a positive decision earlier during the year, were subsequently rejected.

⁸ See for instance *Asylum Applications in Europe, 1999. Trends in Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Applications by Country of Asylum and Origin*, UNHCR, Geneva, 28 February 2000 (<<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics>>).

Recent asylum trends in asylum in Europe

Using period data, this section provides an overview of main asylum trends in Europe. During the period 1995-1999, the 25 European countries listed in table 1 received some 1.6 million asylum-seekers, 85 per cent of which were lodged in the European Union. During 1999, some 450,000 applications were lodged in Europe, 25 per cent more than in 1998. During the past five years, the largest relative increase was recorded in Eastern Europe as its share increased from 1.3 per cent in 1995 to 6 per cent in 1999.

In 1999, 28 per cent of all asylum applications originated from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In Western Europe, Kosovars constituted 33 per cent all asylum-seekers, in Eastern Europe 25 per cent, in Northern Europe 17 per cent and in Southern Europe (excluding Italy) 6 per cent (see Box 1).

Country of asylum	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Eastern Europe	1.3	2.9	3.3	4.8	6.0	4.0
Northern Europe	21.3	17.7	19.5	21.7	24.3	21.4
Southern Europe	3.2	2.9	4.1	5.9	9.8	5.8
Western Europe	74.2	76.4	73.0	67.6	59.8	68.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
- of which: EU-15	92.2	89.3	87.2	81.3	81.2	85.4

Source: Table 1

Some 200,000 asylum-seekers were granted Convention refugee status over the past five years in Europe. Although the 1999 decisions are not yet available for Austria and France, it appears that Convention recognition during 1999 in Europe will be considerably lower than during 1998. Table 2 indicates that, since 1995, the annual number of persons recognized under the 1951 UN Convention has fallen each year. This overall decline trend is mostly due to the sharp fall in recognition in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. Conversely, Eastern Europe, Northern Europe and Southern Europe all show an increase in persons granted Convention status. The United Kingdom registered the strongest increase in recognition under the Convention.

The number of asylum-seekers who were allowed to remain for humanitarian reasons in Europe during 1999 increased by some 50 per cent compared 1998 (Table 3). Among the main asylum countries, the largest increase was recorded in the United Kingdom (+240%) and Switzerland (+225%), whereas a sharp decrease was registered in Sweden (-55%) and the Netherlands (-35%).

Cohort-based asylum statistics

In the above analysis, the recognition rates were obtained by dividing the number of positive decisions made during year X by the total number of positive and negative decisions made during the same year. In this way, an indicator was obtained concerning the percentage positive decisions taken during a given period. Alternatively, a cohort-based approach looks at a given cohort of asylum-seekers and calculates the recognition rate for this entire cohort. “If all cases submitted over the course of a year are followed through to their completion, the (...) measure can be obtained on a cohort basis” (UN Recommendations, page 81). The interest in this approach is prompted by the significant “carry-over” of asylum decisions from one year to the other. If all applications would be decided during the year the application was made (i.e. no pending cases), one could simply divide the number of positive decisions by the number of applications to obtain the recognition rate during a given year.

While it may be useful to know how many of the asylum-seekers who applied during year X were eventually recognized (or rejected), the policy relevance of this indicator seems limited as the calculation can only be made once all applications from a given year have been decided. As illustrated below, it may take many years before an entire cohort of asylum applications receives a decision.

The length of the asylum procedure

While the interest of “cohort-based” recognition rates may thus be more of an academic nature, cohort-based information becomes absolute key in determining the length of asylum procedure - a critical indicator for the efficiency of the refugee status determination process. Speedy procedures are in the interest of both governments and of genuine refugees. As such, the recent increase in the number of pending cases in a number of countries is a worrying trend and of direct concern to all involved. The example below demonstrates that, whereas the number of cases pending in the procedure is an important indicator, one can only determine the actual length of the procedure by linking the case to the year the application was made.

Comparing period and cohort information: the case of the United Kingdom

The UK has been chosen as it is one of the very few countries which have published the data required for a period and cohort-based analysis. As indicated in Table 7, the UK developed a backlog of some 40,000 decisions in the early 1990s. Despite the fact that in subsequent years the number of decisions sometimes surpassed the number of applications, the situation has, up to this day, not yet been normalized. In fact, due to a sharp increase in applications during 1999, the number of pending increased to some 103,000 by the end of 1999.

Table 8 shows the distribution of asylum decision by the year the application was made. One-quarter or less of all applications lodged in any given year during 1990-1997 received a decision during the same year (see also Table 9). The three columns of the right hand side of the table, calculated by the author, show the proportion of

applications decided by the end of 1998 by year the application was made. For instance, some 20,300 applications lodged in 1990 had been decided by the end of 1998, some 77 per cent of the total number of applications lodged during 1990 (26,200).

Based on the crude assumption that both applications and decisions were distributed evenly throughout each year (no statistics are available by month), Table 10 shows that the average processing time for asylum applications in the UK in first instance was around 2 years for much of the 1990s. Although the situation somewhat improved in 1998 (1.9 compared to 2.4 years in 1997), the situation during 1999 will have undoubtedly worsened. The figures have not yet been published, however.

The granting of refugee status generally take the longest, whereas refusals (including rejections on formal grounds) need the least time in the United Kingdom (see Box 2). At the end of 1998, the average processing time for refugee status and exceptional leave to remain was some 3 years, whereas this was 1.5 years for refusals.

Box 2. Estimated average processing time, United Kingdom									
	Year of initial decision								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Decisions	1.55	1.70	2.09	2.31	1.85	1.96	1.88	2.35	1.92
Refugee status	1.33	1.90	2.52	2.54	2.38	2.64	3.11	3.43	2.90
Exceptional leave	1.71	2.26	2.42	2.42	1.88	1.79	1.76	2.74	3.03
Refused (total)	1.36	1.31	1.79	2.12	1.82	1.96	1.84	2.16	1.49

Data source: UK Government, calculations by author.

In Box 3, the cohort and period-based recognition rates for the UK have been summarized (see also Table 11 and 12). A number of observations can be made. First, recognition rates in the late 1980s were considerably higher than during the 1990s, a conclusion that can be drawn from the period and the cohort-based rates. Second, a positive relationship exists between recognition rates and the average processing time: the longer the processing time, the higher the rate. This observation cannot be derived from period-based calculations.

Box 3. Cohort and period-based Convention and Exceptional Leave To Remain recognition											
	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
CON (PB)	23.2	31.8	22.9	8.3	3.2	6.8	3.9	4.8	5.7	11.1	16.9
ELTR (PB)	81.6	87.2	82.5	44.4	47.1	54.3	21.4	21.1	18.7	19.7	29.3
CON (CB)	13.4	14.5	6.0	4.9	17.4	8.9	6.7	5.7	6.3	9.5	8.8
ELTR (CB)	57.6	50.0	60.7	54.6	28.1	38.3	14.7	11.1	14.6	12.7	8.2

Evidence from Canada and Switzerland

Due to a lack of comparable data, it is difficult to ascertain whether the situation in other countries differs from the United Kingdom. However, data on total decisions by year of application from Canada and Switzerland indicate that the asylum processing in the UK is markedly slower than in the other two countries. In Switzerland, more than 60 per cent of the applications lodged in 1998 was decided during 1998, compared to 36 per cent in the UK and to only 23 per cent in Canada. (Note that the Canadian data refer only to the substantive procedure of the Immigration and Refugee Board. Furthermore, the data for the early nineties are difficult to compare with the later data due to a change in the procedure.) At the end of 1998, the estimated average processing time for asylum applications in Switzerland was one year, almost half the UK estimate, where the Canada it was estimated at 1.6 years. It should be stressed, however, that these are rough estimates. More precise information on the duration of the procedure can only be established on the basis of monthly data, which were not available to the author. A second major problem for cohort analysis is the absence of data by nationality.

Discussion

The above analysis has shown some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with period- and cohort-based asylum data. First, in the calculation of recognition rates, a cohort approach does not seem to be particularly useful as these rates can only be calculated once all decisions have been taken on applications lodged during a given year. Cohort-based recognition rates for the more recent years are subject to significant change in the near future due to the high level of pending cases in Europe.

Cohort-based data is essential to determine the efficiency of asylum procedures. Unfortunately, very few countries are able to provide the information on the type of decision by month or year of application and by nationality.

The above analysis has shown that period-based recognition rates allow for an instant comparison between years and countries as soon as the year is over. [In this context, it should be recalled that period-based recognition rates measure something else than cohort-based rates.] Furthermore, their much wider availability guarantees a much wider coverage, an important consideration when compiling internationally comparable data. The period-based pending cases at the end of the period have proven a strong indicator of (in-)efficiencies in the asylum procedure.

Table 1. Asylum applications submitted in Europe, 1995-1999							
Country of asylum	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total	
Bulgaria	520	300	430	830	1,330	3,410	
Czech Rep.	1,410	2,160	2,100	4,080	8,550	18,300	
Hungary	590	670	1,110	7,370	11,500	21,240	
Poland	840	3,210	3,530	3,370	2,960	13,910	
Romania	-	590	1,430	1,240	1,670	4,930	
Slovakia	360	420	650	510	1,320	3,260	
Eastern Europe	3,720	7,350	9,250	17,400	27,330	65,050	
Denmark	5,100	5,890	5,100	5,700	6,470	28,260	
Finland	850	710	970	1,270	3,110	6,910	
Ireland	420	1,180	3,880	4,630	7,720	17,830	
Norway	1,460	1,780	2,270	8,370	10,160	24,040	
Sweden	9,050	5,750	9,660	12,840	11,230	48,530	
United Kingdom (1)	43,970	29,640	32,500	46,020	71,150	223,280	
Northern Europe	60,850	44,950	54,380	78,830	109,840	348,850	
Greece	1,310	1,640	4,380	2,950	1,530	11,810	
Italy	1,730	680	1,860	11,120	33,360	48,750	
Portugal	450	270	250	340	270	1,580	
Slovenia	-	40	70	500	870	1,480	
Spain	5,680	4,730	4,980	6,650	8,410	30,450	
Southern Europe	9,170	7,360	11,540	21,560	44,440	94,070	
Austria	5,920	6,990	6,720	13,810	20,130	53,570	
Belgium	11,420	12,430	11,790	21,960	35,780	93,380	
France	20,170	17,410	21,400	22,370	30,830	112,180	
Germany (2)	127,940	116,370	104,350	98,640	95,110	542,410	
Liechtenstein	-	-	-	230	520	750	
Luxembourg	390	260	430	1,710	2,910	5,700	
Netherlands	29,260	22,170	34,440	45,220	39,300	170,390	
Switzerland	17,020	18,000	23,980	41,300	46,070	146,370	
Western Europe	212,120	193,630	203,110	245,240	270,650	1,124,750	
Total	285,860	253,290	278,280	363,030	452,260	1,632,720	
- European Union	263,660	226,120	242,710	295,230	367,310	1,395,030	
Notes							
A dash ("-") indicates that value is zero, rounded to zero, not available or not applicable.							
Data refer to number of persons.							
The regions used in this and following tables are from the UN Secretariat, Population Division.							
(1) Number of cases. The average number of persons per case is some 1.3.							
(2) "New" applications only, that is, excluding applications which are "re-opened".							
Source: Governments.							

Table 2. Recognition of asylum applicants under the 1951 UN Convention in Europe, 1995-1999						
Country of asylum	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Bulgaria	50	150	130	90	180	600
Czech Rep.	60	160	100	80	80	480
Hungary	180	170	160	440	310	1,260
Poland	110	130	150	60	50	500
Romania	-	90	80	180	250	600
Slovakia	70	130	70	50	30	350
Eastern Europe	470	830	690	900	900	3,790
Denmark	4,970	1,440	980	1,090	1,140	9,620
Finland	10	10	10	10	30	70
Ireland	20	40	210	170	510	950
Norway	30	10	90	110	180	420
Sweden	150	130	1,310	1,100	330	3,020
United Kingdom	1,300	2,240	3,990	5,350	7,080	19,960
Northern Europe	6,480	3,870	6,590	7,830	9,270	34,040
Greece	200	230	220	440	150	1,240
Italy	290	170	350	1,030	810	2,650
Portugal	50	10	-	-	20	80
Slovenia	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	460	240	160	240	290	1,390
Southern Europe	1,000	650	730	1,710	1,270	5,360
Austria	990	720	640	500	-	2,850
Belgium	1,410	1,680	1,870	1,700	1,480	8,140
France	4,530	4,340	4,110	3,980	-	16,960
Germany	23,470	24,100	18,220	11,320	10,260	87,370
Liechtenstein	-	-	-	-	-	-
Luxembourg	-	10	-	40	-	50
Netherlands	7,980	8,810	6,630	2,360	1,510	27,290
Switzerland	2,650	2,270	2,640	2,030	2,050	11,640
Western Europe	41,030	41,930	34,110	21,930	15,300	154,300
Total	48,980	47,280	42,120	32,370	26,740	197,490
- European Union	45,830	44,170	38,700	29,330	23,610	181,640

Table 3. Humanitarian status granted to asylum applicants in Europe, 1995-1999¹						
Country of asylum	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Bulgaria	20	10	-	10	380	420
Czech Republic	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hungary	-	-	-	230	1,780	2,010
Poland	-	-	-	-	-	-
Romania	-	-	-	100	370	470
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eastern Europe	20	10	-	340	2,530	2,900
Denmark	14,850	6,770	4,470	3,230	2,620	31,940
Finland	230	340	290	380	470	1,710
Ireland	10	10	120	30	40	210
Norway	2,620	1,450	1,090	2,080	3,030	10,270
Sweden	3,540	3,080	7,110	5,970	2,610	22,310
United Kingdom	4,410	5,060	3,120	3,910	13,340	29,840
Northern Europe	25,660	16,710	16,200	15,600	22,110	96,280
Greece	-	70	90	290	410	860
Italy	-	-	-	-	860	860
Portugal	-	60	10	30	50	150
Slovenia	-	-	-	30	10	40
Spain	230	190	200	730	470	1,820
Southern Europe	230	320	300	1,080	1,800	3,730
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-
France	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	3,630	2,080	2,770	2,540	2,100	13,120
Liechtenstein	-	-	-	190	-	190
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	10,520	14,780	10,360	12,740	7,990	56,390
Switzerland	11,940	8,170	5,980	7,000	22,840	55,930
Western Europe	26,090	25,030	19,110	22,470	32,930	125,630
Total	52,000	42,070	35,610	39,490	59,370	228,540
- European Union	37,420	32,440	28,540	29,850	30,960	159,210
Notes						
A dash ("-") indicates that value is zero, rounded to zero, not available or not applicable.						
¹ Includes all grants of non-Convention status ("humanitarian", "de facto", "B", etc.), but excludes stay of deportation.						

Table 4. Rejected asylum applications in Europe, 1995-1999¹

Country of asylum	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Bulgaria	10	30	60	110	180	390
Czech Rep.	20	20	1,430	580	1,870	3,920
Hungary	380	440	860	2,950	3,540	8,170
Poland	210	400	600	1,390	2,200	4,800
Romania	-	520	210	2,300	1,650	4,680
Slovakia	60	60	80	40	180	420
Eastern Europe	680	1,470	3,240	7,370	9,620	22,380
Denmark	3,500	4,230	4,920	3,970	3,500	20,120
Finland	270	250	280	240	1,330	2,370
Ireland	40	30	300	1,320	3,640	5,330
Norway	2,420	2,320	2,790	3,290	6,440	17,260
Sweden	5,570	3,100	5,150	6,500	5,590	25,910
United Kingdom	17,710	28,040	22,780	17,470	7,730	93,730
Northern Europe	29,510	37,970	36,220	32,790	28,230	164,720
Greece	1,050	1,650	2,230	3,750	1,570	10,250
Italy	1,430	520	1,310	2,390	630	6,280
Portugal	510	170	210	60	210	1,160
Slovenia	-	20	10	100	170	300
Spain	6,080	4,350	4,620	5,140	5,750	25,940
Southern Europe	9,070	6,710	8,380	11,440	8,330	43,930
Austria	6,630	8,030	7,290	3,490	-	25,440
Belgium	4,130	5,430	7,300	4,830	3,090	24,780
France	24,430	17,860	20,060	18,770	-	81,120
Germany	117,940	126,650	101,890	130,080	80,230	556,790
Liechtenstein	-	-	-	-	-	-
Luxembourg	-	30	20	70	-	120
Netherlands	9,720	34,170	13,780	11,040	51,420	120,130
Switzerland	13,460	14,230	13,430	11,660	27,140	79,920
Western Europe	176,310	206,400	163,770	179,940	161,880	888,300
Total	215,570	252,550	211,610	231,540	208,060	1,119,330
- European Union	199,010	234,510	192,140	209,120	164,690	999,470

Notes

¹ Generally only those which have been rejected on the basis of a substantive decision.

Table 5. Convention recognition rates in Europe, 1995-1999¹

Country of asylum	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Bulgaria	62.5	78.9	68.4	42.9	24.3	42.6
Czech Rep.	75.0	88.9	6.5	12.1	4.1	10.9
Hungary	32.1	27.9	15.7	12.2	5.5	11.0
Poland	34.4	24.5	20.0	4.1	2.2	9.4
Romania	..	14.8	27.6	7.0	11.0	10.4
Slovakia	53.8	68.4	46.7	55.6	14.3	45.5
Eastern Europe	40.2	35.9	17.6	10.5	6.9	13.0
Denmark	21.3	11.6	9.5	13.1	15.7	15.6
Finland	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7
Ireland	28.6	50.0	33.3	11.2	12.2	14.6
Norway	0.6	0.3	2.3	2.0	1.9	1.5
Sweden	1.6	2.1	9.7	8.1	3.9	5.9
United Kingdom	5.6	6.3	13.3	20.0	25.2	13.9
Northern Europe	10.5	6.6	11.2	13.9	15.6	11.5
Greece	16.0	11.8	8.7	9.8	7.0	10.0
Italy	16.9	24.6	21.1	30.1	35.2	27.1
Portugal	8.9	4.2	-	-	7.1	5.8
Slovenia	..	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	6.8	5.0	3.2	3.9	4.5	4.8
Southern Europe	9.7	8.5	7.8	12.0	11.1	10.1
Austria	13.0	8.2	8.1	12.5	..	..
Belgium	25.5	23.6	20.4	26.0	32.4	24.7
France	15.6	19.5	17.0	17.5	..	..
Germany	16.2	15.8	14.8	7.9	11.1	13.3
Liechtenstein	..	..	..	-	..	-
Luxembourg	..	25.0	-	36.4	..	..
Netherlands	28.3	15.3	21.5	9.0	2.5	13.4
Switzerland	9.4	9.2	12.0	9.8	3.9	7.9
Western Europe	16.9	15.3	15.7	9.8	7.3	13.2
Total	15.5	13.8	14.6	10.7	9.1	12.8
- European Union	16.2	14.2	14.9	10.9	10.8	13.6

Notes

¹Total UN Convention (Table 2) divided by total recognized (Table 2 and 3) and total rejected (Table 4) * 100%.

Table 6. Total recognition rates in Europe, 1995-1999¹

Country of asylum	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Bulgaria	87.5	84.2	68.4	47.6	75.7	72.3
Czech Rep.	75.0	88.9	6.5	12.1	4.1	10.9
Hungary	32.1	27.9	15.7	18.5	37.1	28.6
Poland	34.4	24.5	20.0	4.1	2.2	9.4
Romania	..	14.8	27.6	10.9	27.3	18.6
Slovakia	53.8	68.4	46.7	55.6	14.3	45.5
Eastern Europe	41.9	36.4	17.6	14.4	26.3	23.0
Denmark	85.0	66.0	52.6	52.1	51.8	67.4
Finland	47.1	58.3	51.7	61.9	27.3	42.9
Ireland	42.9	62.5	52.4	13.2	13.1	17.9
Norway	52.3	38.6	29.7	40.0	33.3	38.2
Sweden	39.8	50.9	62.0	52.1	34.5	49.4
United Kingdom (2)	24.4	20.7	23.8	34.6	72.5	34.7
Northern Europe	52.1	35.1	38.6	41.7	52.6	44.2
Greece	16.0	15.4	12.2	16.3	26.3	17.0
Italy	16.9	24.6	21.1	30.1	72.6	35.9
Portugal	8.9	29.2	4.5	33.3	25.0	16.5
Slovenia	..	-	-	23.1	5.6	11.8
Spain	10.2	9.0	7.2	15.9	11.7	11.0
Southern Europe	11.9	12.6	10.9	19.6	26.9	17.1
Austria	13.0	8.2	8.1	12.5	..	..
Belgium	25.5	23.6	20.4	26.0	32.4	24.7
France	15.6	19.5	17.0	17.5	..	..
Germany	18.7	17.1	17.1	9.6	13.3	15.3
Liechtenstein	..	..	..	100.0	..	100.0
Luxembourg	..	25.0	-	36.4	..	..
Netherlands	65.6	40.8	55.2	57.8	15.6	41.1
Switzerland	52.0	42.3	39.1	43.6	47.8	45.8
Western Europe	27.6	24.5	24.5	19.8	23.0	24.0
Total	31.9	26.1	26.9	23.7	29.3	27.6
- European Union	29.5	24.6	25.9	22.1	24.9	25.4

Notes

¹Total recognized (Table 2 and 3) divided by total recognized (Table 2 and 3) and total rejected (Table 4) * 100%.

Table 7. Applications and decisions, United Kingdom, 1988-1998

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Applications received	3,998	11,640	26,205	44,840	24,605	22,370
1951 Convention status	628	2,210	920	505	1,115	1,590
Exceptional leave to remain	1,578	3,860	2,400	2,190	15,325	11,125
Rejected (full cons.)	496	890	705	2,325	2,675	4,705
Safe 3rd country grounds				270	595	745
Non compliance				785	15,195	5,240
Total refused	496	890	705	3,380	18,465	10,690
Total decisions	2,702	6,960	4,025	6,075	34,905	23,405
Withdrawn	280	350	370	745	1,540	1,925
Pending end-year			34,050	72,070	49,110	45,805
<i>UN Conv. recognition rate</i>	23.2	31.8	22.9	8.3	3.2	6.8
<i>ELTR recognition rate</i>	58.4	55.5	59.6	36.0	43.9	47.5
<i>Total recognition rate</i>	81.6	87.2	82.5	44.4	47.1	54.3
<i>Refusal rate</i>	18.4	12.8	17.5	55.6	52.9	45.7

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Applications received	32,830	43,965	29,640	32,500	46,015	318,608
1951 Convention status	825	1,295	2,240	3,985	5,345	20,658
Exceptional leave to remain	3,660	4,410	5,055	3,115	3,910	56,628
Rejected (full cons.)	12,655	17,705	28,040	22,780	17,465	110,441
Safe 3rd country grounds	865	1,515	1,615	2,550	1,855	10,010
Non compliance	2,985	2,085	2,015	3,615	2,995	34,915
Total refused	16,505	21,305	31,670	28,945	22,315	155,366
Total decisions	20,990	27,010	38,965	36,045	31,570	232,652
Withdrawn	2,390	2,565	2,925	2,065	1,470	16,625
Pending end-year	55,255	69,650	57,405	51,795	64,770	
<i>UN Conv. recognition rate</i>	3.9	4.8	5.7	11.1	16.9	8.9
<i>ELTR recognition rate</i>	17.4	16.3	13.0	8.6	12.4	24.3
<i>Total recognition rate</i>	21.4	21.1	18.7	19.7	29.3	33.2
<i>Refusal rate</i>	78.6	78.9	81.3	80.3	70.7	66.8

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Issue 10/99, Table 5.1 and previous issues

Table 8. Initial decisions on asylum applications by year of application

Year of application:	Year of initial decision									Total decided	Total applied	% decided
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998			
1987 or <	480	260	435	180	70	50	40	35	20	1,570		
1988	315	250	320	105	40	45	20	15	10	1,120	3,998	28.0
1989	2,000	1,480	2,345	685	235	180	130	110	60	7,225	11,640	62.1
1990	1,065	2,130	10,855	3,150	805	825	470	595	380	20,275	26,205	77.4
1991		1,600	13,300	9,690	1,535	1,535	785	860	490	29,795	44,840	66.4
1992			1,370	4,220	2,655	1,850	1,390	2,120	760	14,365	24,605	58.4
1993				2,605	6,245	3,590	2,470	1,630	625	17,165	22,370	76.7
1994					4,125	6,465	5,520	3,445	1,025	20,580	32,830	62.7
1995						6,815	12,290	6,280	2,295	27,680	43,965	63.0
1996							9,210	6,075	2,500	17,785	29,640	60.0
1997								9,585	7,940	17,525	32,500	53.9
1998									11,280	11,280	46,015	24.5
Not vet recorded	165	360	6,275	2,770	5,280	5,650	6,540	5,295	4,190	36,525		
Total decisions	4,025	6,080	34,900	23,405	20,990	27,005	38,865	36,045	31,575	222,890	318,608	70.0

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Issue 10/99, Table 5.1

Table 9. Initial decisions on asylum applications by year of application (%)									
Year of application:	Year of initial decision								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
1987 or <	11.9	4.3	1.2	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
1988	7.8	4.1	0.9	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0
1989	49.7	24.3	6.7	2.9	1.1	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.2
1990	26.5	35.0	31.1	13.5	3.8	3.1	1.2	1.7	1.2
1991	-	26.3	38.1	41.4	7.3	5.7	2.0	2.4	1.6
1992	-	-	3.9	18.0	12.6	6.9	3.6	5.9	2.4
1993	-	-	-	11.1	29.8	13.3	6.4	4.5	2.0
1994	-	-	-	-	19.7	23.9	14.2	9.6	3.2
1995	-	-	-	-	-	25.2	31.6	17.4	7.3
1996	-	-	-	-	-	-	23.7	16.9	7.9
1997	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26.6	25.1
1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35.7
Not yet recorded	4.1	5.9	18.0	11.8	25.2	20.9	16.8	14.7	13.3
Total decisions	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Table 8, calculated by the author.

Table 10. Initial decisions on asylum applications by length of processing time									
Average proc. time (yrs)	Year of initial decision								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
11.5									20
10.5								35	10
9.5							40	15	60
8.5						50	20	110	380
7.5					70	45	130	595	490
6.5				180	40	180	470	860	760
5.5			435	105	235	825	785	2,120	625
4.5		260	320	685	805	1,535	1,390	1,630	1,025
3.5	480	250	2,345	3,150	1,535	1,850	2,470	3,445	2,295
2.5	315	1,480	10,855	9,690	2,655	3,590	5,520	6,280	2,500
1.5	2,000	2,130	13,300	4,220	6,245	6,465	12,290	6,075	7,940
0.5	1,065	1,600	1,370	2,605	4,125	6,815	9,210	9,585	11,280
Total (*)	3,860	5,720	28,625	20,635	15,710	21,355	32,325	30,750	27,385
Average	1.55	1.70	2.09	2.31	1.85	1.96	1.88	2.35	1.92

Source: Table 8, calculated by the author. (*) Excluding "not yet recorded"

Table 11. Period based Convention recognition rates, UK

Year of application:	Year of initial decision								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
1987 or <	7.3	21.2	13.8	19.4	21.4	10.0	12.5	14.3	25.0
1988	14.3	10.0	14.1	19.0	0.0	11.1	25.0	0.0	50.0
1989	28.5	8.1	8.7	14.6	10.6	2.8	3.8	9.1	16.7
1990	25.8	7.7	3.6	6.3	5.6	4.8	6.4	4.2	11.8
1991	-	8.4	2.0	7.2	4.6	3.3	8.9	9.9	19.4
1992	-	-	6.9	6.8	5.8	13.2	25.9	42.5	59.9
1993	-	-	-	5.0	3.4	4.9	12.6	22.4	54.4
1994	-	-	-	-	2.1	3.6	4.4	13.2	34.6
1995	-	-	-	-	-	1.4	2.8	8.4	25.9
1996	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.1	6.4	25.0
1997	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.3	14.6
1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.8
Not yet recorded	0.0	0.0	0.9	4.3	4.4	8.0	11.7	13.5	15.9
Total	23.0	8.2	3.2	6.8	4.0	4.8	5.8	11.1	16.9

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Issue 10/99, Table 5.1. Calculations by author.

Table 12. Period based total recognition rates, UK

Year of application:	Year of initial decision								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
1987 or <	85.4	80.8	67.8	75.0	42.9	30.0	25.0	28.6	50.0
1988	68.3	66.0	67.2	57.1	37.5	33.3	50.0	33.3	100.0
1989	90.5	77.7	75.9	67.2	21.3	13.9	30.8	68.2	75.0
1990	68.1	31.9	71.0	74.9	19.9	10.9	14.9	33.6	80.3
1991	-	21.9	22.6	57.0	13.7	6.5	12.7	16.3	80.6
1992	-	-	38.3	78.6	43.9	41.4	41.7	50.0	76.3
1993	-	-	-	28.6	19.1	17.3	23.1	31.9	67.2
1994	-	-	-	-	20.0	19.6	9.4	17.6	42.0
1995	-	-	-	-	-	17.7	21.4	16.1	33.8
1996	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.6	18.4	47.2
1997	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.3	25.4
1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16.9
Not yet recorded	100.0	36.1	46.3	4.3	16.2	28.5	25.9	24.0	28.5
Total	82.6	44.2	47.1	54.3	21.4	21.1	18.8	19.7	29.3

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Issue 10/99, Table 5.1. Calculations by author.

Table 13. Speed of asylum decisions taken in Canada, Switzerland and the UK									
<i>Average processing time of asylum applications</i>									
Year	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
Canada	0.89	0.96	0.95	1.01	1.26	1.35	1.50	1.67	1.61
UK	1.55	1.70	2.09	2.31	1.85	1.96	1.88	2.35	1.92
Switzerland	1.32	1.38	1.82	1.47	1.85	2.18	1.65	1.13	0.98
<i>Percentage applications decided in one year or less</i>									
Year	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
Canada	61.0	56.5	58.0	54.7	31.0	29.1	22.7	18.7	22.8
UK	26.5	26.3	3.9	11.1	19.7	25.2	23.7	26.6	35.7
Switzerland	46.7	42.4	25.0	54.6	39.4	46.9	51.2	61.5	65.7
<i>Percentage applications decided in two years or less</i>									
Year	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
Canada	100.0	97.7	97.7	96.3	94.4	88.2	81.0	69.7	73.3
UK	76.1	61.3	42.0	29.2	49.4	49.2	55.3	43.4	60.9
Switzerland	81.1	82.6	66.3	72.0	68.1	67.8	80.7	88.9	95.1
Source; Governments, calculations by author.									