

Remarks by President Charles Michel at the signing ceremony of the Georgia agreement with President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili



Six weeks ago, on 1 March, I met with you all in Tbilisi. I called on you to relaunch political dialogue to set aside the political stalemate in your country and we met at the President's Palace where you are meeting tonight.

I put on the table five substantive points that needed to be addressed to overcome the challenges. I promised to you I would remain engaged. I appointed my Personal Envoy, Mr Danielsson, who visited Georgia twice and I asked my team to accompany the process.

Six weeks later, the crisis is over. I want to thank you all for your commitment and courage to put the differences aside in the interest of Georgia.

I would like to thank the diplomatic team that has worked so tirelessly with you – Christian Danielsson as well as Ambassador Hartzell and Ambassador Degnan. I am thankful for all their efforts. I am thankful to the Prime Minister for his vision. And I am thankful to you, political leaders and elected members of opposition parties for your courageous political choices. I would also like to thank you, President Zourabichvili: we were in close contact throughout this period and would like to thank you for sharing your advice with me.

This agreement is not the finish line. This agreement is the starting point for your work towards consolidating Georgia's democracy and taking Georgia forward on its Euro-Atlantic future.

More than ever, I am convinced Georgian citizens count on you to focus on the pressing challenges Georgia is facing – the economy, the Covid-19 pandemic and its fall out, reforms in the rule of law sphere and the judiciary, as well as the regional challenges.

Lastly, I also believe that the new chapter you have opened today is particularly important in the difficult regional context. The region is facing many challenges, as the Nagorno-Karabakh war painfully reminded us last year. Today, the military build-up along Ukraine's borders and in the illegally-annexed Crimea is of a deep concern.

The way you have addressed the stalemate today is particularly important in this regional context. It is a truly European way of resolving the crisis.

I have the pleasure to announce that I will come to Georgia tomorrow to meet you all to strengthen the ties between Georgia and Europe. This is a clear

sign of confidence in you.

Weekly schedule of President Charles Michel



We use cookies in order to ensure that you can get the best browsing experience possible on the Council website. Certain cookies are used to obtain aggregated statistics about website visits to help us constantly improve the site and better serve your needs. Other cookies are used to boost performance and guarantee security of the website.

With your permission, we will use AT internet cookies to produce aggregated, anonymous data about our visitors' browsing and behaviour on our website. We will use this data to improve your experience on our website.

To get more information about these cookies, how and why we use them and how you can change your settings, check our [cookies policy page](#).

[Read more](#) [I accept cookies](#) [I refuse cookies](#)

Ukrainians lodged 72% more applications for asylum in February

Ukrainians lodged considerably more asylum applications in the EU+ in February 2021, compared to January, making them one of the top ten nationalities of applicants. This is in stark contrast with several other main nationalities, who are still lodging far fewer asylum applications in the EU+ compared to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Analysis [released](#) by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on asylum trends in February 2021 shows that **about 38 300 applications for international protection were lodged in the EU+ in February 2021.**¹ While the overall level was roughly stable compared to recent months, **Ukrainians lodged many more applications (up by 72%, to almost 1 000)**, the most in four years and substantially more than before the outbreak of COVID-19. This sudden increase placed Ukraine among the top 10 origin countries for the first time since 2016.



Irregular migration towards the Canary Islands has increased in recent months. Correspondingly, **Moroccans** (+ 14%), **Malians** and **Senegalese** (+ 22% in both cases) are increasingly applying for international protection in the EU+.

The top origin countries in February were Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Nigeria. The number of applications by Syrians stabilised above 10 000, more than the next six origin countries combined. **Syrians alone accounted for a quarter of all asylum applications** lodged in the EU+. As in January, half of the applications by Syrians were repeated applications in the same country.

One year on, asylum applications in the EU+ have not returned to pre-COVID-19 levels

For half of the top 10 origin countries of applicants, applications have thus far not come close to the level in February 2020, the last month before the outbreak of COVID-19 in Europe. In February 2021, total applications in the EU+ were less than two thirds of the applications lodged one year earlier. As there is also **no evidence of an upward trend towards pre-COVID-19 levels**, the effect of the pandemic on asylum applications is evidently not short-lived.

In contrast, **applications by self-claimed unaccompanied minors were comparable to pre-COVID-19 levels.** In February 2021, unaccompanied minors lodged more than 1 300 applications in the EU+, corresponding to 80% of the number in February 2020. Already in late 2020, applications by unaccompanied minors had exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

More decisions than applications

EU+ asylum authorities issued almost 41 000 first instance decisions in February 2021, slightly more than in January (+ 7%) and above the level of applications. Some 405 600 cases were pending at first instance, roughly stable from January. **The recognition rate² in the EU+ was 32% in February 2021**, matching the EU+ recognition rate for 2020. In line with previous months, three out of five positive decisions in February granted refugee status, while the remainder granted subsidiary protection.

For more information and an interactive data visualisation, please visit the [Latest Asylum Trends](#) page.

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu

Notes

[1] Data on two EU+ countries were missing for February 2021.

[2] This means that applications have not reached at least 90 % of the

level in February 2020 at some point since.

[Justice, rights and values: Council adopts programmes of up to €1.8 billion for 2021-2027](#)



We use cookies in order to ensure that you can get the best browsing experience possible on the Council website. Certain cookies are used to obtain aggregated statistics about website visits to help us constantly improve the site and better serve your needs. Other cookies are used to boost performance and guarantee security of the website.

With your permission, we will use AT internet cookies to produce aggregated, anonymous data about our visitors' browsing and behaviour on our website. We will use this data to improve your experience on our website.

To get more information about these cookies, how and why we use them and how you can change your settings, check our [cookies policy page](#).

[Read more](#) [I accept cookies](#) [I refuse cookies](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain third countries concerning restrictive measures against Myanmar/Burma](#)



On 22 March 2021 the Council adopted Decision (CFSP) 2021/483¹ concerning restrictive measures against Myanmar/Burma.

The Council added 11 persons to the list of natural and legal persons, entities and bodies subject to restrictive measures in the Annex to Decision

2013/184/CFSP.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania², the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this Council Decision.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

¹ Published on 22.03.2021 in the Official Journal of the European Union no. L 99, p.40.

² The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.