

2025 CEAR REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Refugees in Spain and Europe



CEA(R)

Comisión Española
de Ayuda al Refugiado

**The Spanish Commission for
Refugee Aid (CEAR) is a non-
governmental organization founded
in 1979 with the aim of working
alongside citizens to defend the
right to asylum.**
www.cear.es



Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives

This Creative Commons license allows others to copy, share, and distribute the work in its original, unadapted form, as long as they give credit to the creator, but only for non-commercial purposes. It restricts commercial use and adaptation or modification of the work.

All rights reserved for the photographs in this summary.

A family lights a fire in front of their tent, hoping to bring some light to their darkness and warmth before sleeping without blankets. February 2024, Gaza, occupied Palestine.
© Abed Zagout

CEA(R)
Comisión Española
de Ayuda al Refugiado

Financiado por:



SECRETARÍA DE ESTADO
DE MIGRACIONES
DIRECCIÓN GENERAL
DE ATENCIÓN HUMANITARIA
Y DEL SISTEMA DE ACOGIDA DE PROTECCIÓN INTERNACIONAL



Cofinanciado por
la Unión Europea



Fondos Europeos

INTRODUCTION

The *23rd Annual Report* of the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR) analyzes the situation of refugees in the world, the European Union, and, chiefly, Spain.

The global number of forced displacements continued to rise in 2024, reaching 122.6 million people, according to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, and Venezuela were the main countries of origin of refugees. The largest internal forced displacement crisis took place in Sudan, while multiple factors such as political instability, armed conflict, and the climate crisis generated both internal and international displacement in the Sahel. The genocide in Palestine, especially the Gaza Strip, led by Israel with the connivance and silence of the international community, continued to claim thousands of lives, forcibly displace millions, and jeopardize the health, education, and very livelihood of the Palestinian people.

In May 2024, the European Union adopted the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which enshrines an approach that puts the implementation of safe, legal routes and protection on the back burner and instead promotes greater border externalization and the strengthening of return policies. Given the risk these new regulations pose of rolling back rights, it is crucial that Spain adopt a safeguards-based approach centered around people and their rights, bolster reception conditions and inclusion measures, ensure fair procedures and mechanisms for monitoring respect for human rights, and avoid measures that could limit access to protection.

In 2024, Spain received the second-highest number of applications for international protection of all EU countries. The greatest

number of applicants came from Venezuela and Colombia, as in 2023, while Mali emerged as the third most common nationality of asylum seekers in 2024. This is due to the escalation of the conflict and humanitarian situation in the Sahel region. Nonetheless, Spain was also one of the EU countries to grant the least protection, with a recognition rate of 18.5%, compared to the EU average of 46.6%. Asylum seekers continued to face obstacles to accessing the procedure, specifically due to trouble securing an asylum appointment.

The number of arrivals to the Canary Islands increased, albeit less than anticipated, thus prolonging the reception crisis, especially for unaccompanied children and adolescents, to an alarming extent. The response from the Spanish and Canary Islands governments to find a solution to this situation has been marked by several milestones. In March 2025, an agreement was reached to establish a solidarity-based mechanism for distributing minors, opening a window of opportunity to provide effective protection, pending its practical implementation.

Lastly, there were numerous advances during this second year of implementation of the concerted action model for reception and integration, although some challenges continued. Applicants in additional vulnerable situations, such as those with mental health disorders, who are no longer eligible for guardianship, and the elderly, continued to face additional, invisible obstacles, requiring specific attention and a response appropriate to each of their specific needs.







THE GLOBAL EXODUS

According to UNHCR, 122.6 million forcibly displaced people were registered by mid-2024, which represents a 5% increase compared to 2023. This upsurge is partially explained by the intensification of humanitarian crises and ongoing armed conflicts, as well as the rise in natural disasters, which demonstrates the lack of effective commitment and action to address the climate emergency.

Of these, 43.7 million were refugees, including nearly 6 million Palestinian refugees under the mandate of UNRWA, 8 million asylum seekers, and approximately 4.4 million stateless people.

The majority of refugees sought protection in neighboring countries, most of which were low- or middle-income countries. The following countries hosted more than one-third of the global number of refugees: Germany (2.7 million), Colombia (2.8 million), Iran (3.8 million), Turkey (3.1 million), and Uganda (1.7 million).

It is worth noting that the vast majority of forced displacements occurred within the borders of the displaced persons' countries of origin, with this type of displacement increasing by 6% (from 66.1 million to 72.1 million) compared to 2023. 90% of them occurred in Haiti, Myanmar, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and Ukraine.

This section analyzes the main displacement crises across the globe: Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Sudan, and the Sahel. In Syria, the regime change following the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad on December 8, 2024 facilitated the return of thousands of internally displaced people (500,000) and refugees (125,000) to their communities. However, the humanitarian situation, the destruction of infrastructure, tensions between different ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities within the country, and the intensification of Israeli attacks both in Syria and throughout the region are some of the challenges inherent to achieving a safe return over the short and medium term. Despite this uncertain and unsafe situation, several EU countries hastily announced their decision to suspend the examination of pending Syrian asylum



In 2024, 122.6 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced.

mid-2024, the global Afghan refugee population reached 6.4 million, more than double the figure recorded in 2020 (2.7 million). Most were hosted in neighboring countries, primarily Iran and Pakistan, where many face deportation risks.

Regarding Sudan, despite the extremely grave humanitarian situation and the violence (including documented war crimes) in which the country is currently immersed, the international community continues to fail to provide safe routes or adequate humanitarian aid for a severely affected population. Nearly 9 million people have been displaced within the country in the largest internal exodus ever recorded, while more than 3 million have fled in search of refuge, mainly to neighboring countries such as Chad (754,059), South Sudan (323,897), and Egypt (1,200,000).

applications. The UNHCR has urged caution, stressing that the conditions for withdrawing refugee status for Syrians do not currently exist.

The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela persists despite an economic rebound. In mid-2024, the number of refugees and displaced people from the country rose by 28% compared to 2023, bringing the total to 7.7 million, according to UNHCR data.

The humanitarian situation and forced displacements in Ukraine remain alarming. The conflict escalated in 2024, with systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL). This pushed the number of refugees from Ukraine up to 6.8 million by mid-2024, or 500,000 more than in 2023. Of these, 92% were sheltered in Europe, specifically the EU, which has granted protection to 4.3 million displaced people since the historic activation of the Temporary Protection Directive in 2022. On the other hand, 3.6 million people had moved within the country itself, which is a slight decrease compared to 2023.

In Afghanistan, 2024 was a particularly grave year in terms of human rights and humanitarian situations, especially for women and girls. This was exacerbated by the environmental crisis that ravaged the country. By

Lastly, it is worth highlighting the ongoing Israeli military campaign of genocide in Gaza, which began on October 8, 2023, and has already killed more than 50,000 people, or 2% of the Gaza population, although the death toll is estimated to be higher. These figures include the murder of UNRWA humanitarian personnel (300 people) and more than 230 journalists. Israel's aggression is so far-reaching that it has managed to blur all the red lines of IHL, subjecting the population of Gaza to a total siege, with no electricity, water, food, or medicine, under continuous bombardment from land, sea, and air. In 2024, 84% of Palestinian hospitals and 92% of Palestinian homes were damaged, claiming an average of 100 lives per day since the start of the offensive. It is important to remember that the Palestinian population of the West Bank is also the victim of genocide; 430 people (at least 150 of them children) were killed by occupation forces and settlers. These killings are not isolated incidents, and along with the aggression against Gaza, are part of a "long-term, intentional, systematic, State-organized process forced displacement and replacement of Palestinians," as noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, to perpetuate Israel's military colonization and apartheid of Palestine •

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND REFUGEES

Given the global increase in forced displacement, the EU has implemented more restrictive, security-based migration policies to prevent the arrival of people with protection needs to Europe.

In 2024, 208,909 irregular migrant arrivals to the EU were recorded, or 29% less than in 2023. Thus, the downward trend that started in 2015 when there were more than 1 million arrivals continued. This decline is linked to the security-based and border externalization approach of European migration policies, which are moving further away from respect for human rights and the logic of shared responsibility.

Syria remains the main country of origin, with numbers twice as high as Mali's, followed by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco. There was a drastic reduction in arrivals from Guinea (-60%), and the Ivory Coast is no longer one of the top ten countries with the most arrivals.

Sea arrivals accounted for 91% (189,167) and land arrivals for only 9% (19,512). The Central Mediterranean route to Italy and Malta, traditionally the busiest, experienced a significant 58% drop, with 66,855 arrivals. In contrast, the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands increased by 17.4%, with 46,843 arrivals. Arrivals via the Western Mediterranean route to Spain decreased by 2.6% at 17,127 (14,480 by sea and 2,647 by land). The Eastern Mediterranean route (Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus) remained relatively stable, with arrivals coming mainly by land. Greece, however, experienced a 29% increase, with 62,043 arrivals.

In 2024, 208,909 migrants arrived in the EU, 29% less than in 2023.

Italy remains the main country of arrival (66,617 migrants, -58%), followed by Spain (63,970, +12.5%) and Greece (62,043, +29%). Land arrivals were mainly in Bulgaria (9,291), Greece (7,574), and Spain (2,647), the latter experiencing the largest percentage increase (+114.5%).

Despite the general decline in arrivals, the mortality rates remain alarming. In 2024, 3,419 people died or went missing en route to Europe. Most of these deaths occurred on Mediterranean routes, with the Central Mediterranean being the most lethal, accounting for 50% of all deaths. As for the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, 1,142 deaths or disappearances were recorded, or 19% more than in 2023. There were 466 deaths on the Western Mediterranean route to Spain, and 175 on the Eastern Mediterranean route.

In 2024, the European Union received 995,335 applications for international protection, 12% fewer than in 2023. Germany received 229,695 applications, once again the most of all EU countries, albeit a 34% decrease from the previous year. The majority came from nationals of Syria, Afghanistan, and Turkey. Spain ranked second with 167,366 applications, mainly from Venezuelans (40%), Colombians (24%), and Malians (6%). Italy received 151,120 applications (11% more than in 2023), mostly from Bangladesh, Peru, and Pakistan. France fell to fourth place, receiving 130,860 applications (-21.5%) from a wider variety of countries of origin: Ukraine, Afghanistan, the Republic of the Congo, and Guinea. Greece remained in fifth place with 69,000 applications, up 7% from 2023; Syria, Afghanistan, and Egypt were the main countries of origin.

In terms of the nationality of applicants, Syria topped the list with 147,965 applications, despite a 17% drop compared to 2023. It was followed by Venezuela (72,775, +7%) and Afghanistan (72,155, -34%). Colombia remained in fourth place with 50,330 applications (-20%), and Turkey dropped by 50% to 46,835 applications. There was a noteworthy increase in applications from Ukrainians (+96%) and Malians (+142%),

Regarding unaccompanied minors, 36,290 applied for asylum in 2024, 15% less than in 2023. The majority were from Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Somalia, and Guinea. Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Spain, and Bulgaria were the EU countries to receive the most applications from unaccompanied minors.

By the end of 2024, some 4.3 million people displaced by the war in Ukraine remained under temporary protection in the EU, mainly in Germany and Poland, although the Czech Republic hosts the largest number per capita (one for every 28 residents). An estimated 250,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Spain. This year, the EU issued 780,208 new temporary protection decisions, 26.1% fewer than in 2023, although countries such as Denmark, Spain, and Bulgaria issued more than in 2023. Since 2022, the EU has granted temporary protection to nearly 6.2 million people, and its validity has been extended until March 2026. On the other hand, asylum applications from Ukrainians doubled in 2024, due in part to restrictions on passport renewals imposed by Ukraine on men of military age, which makes it difficult to renew temporary protection permits and substantiates fears of persecution.

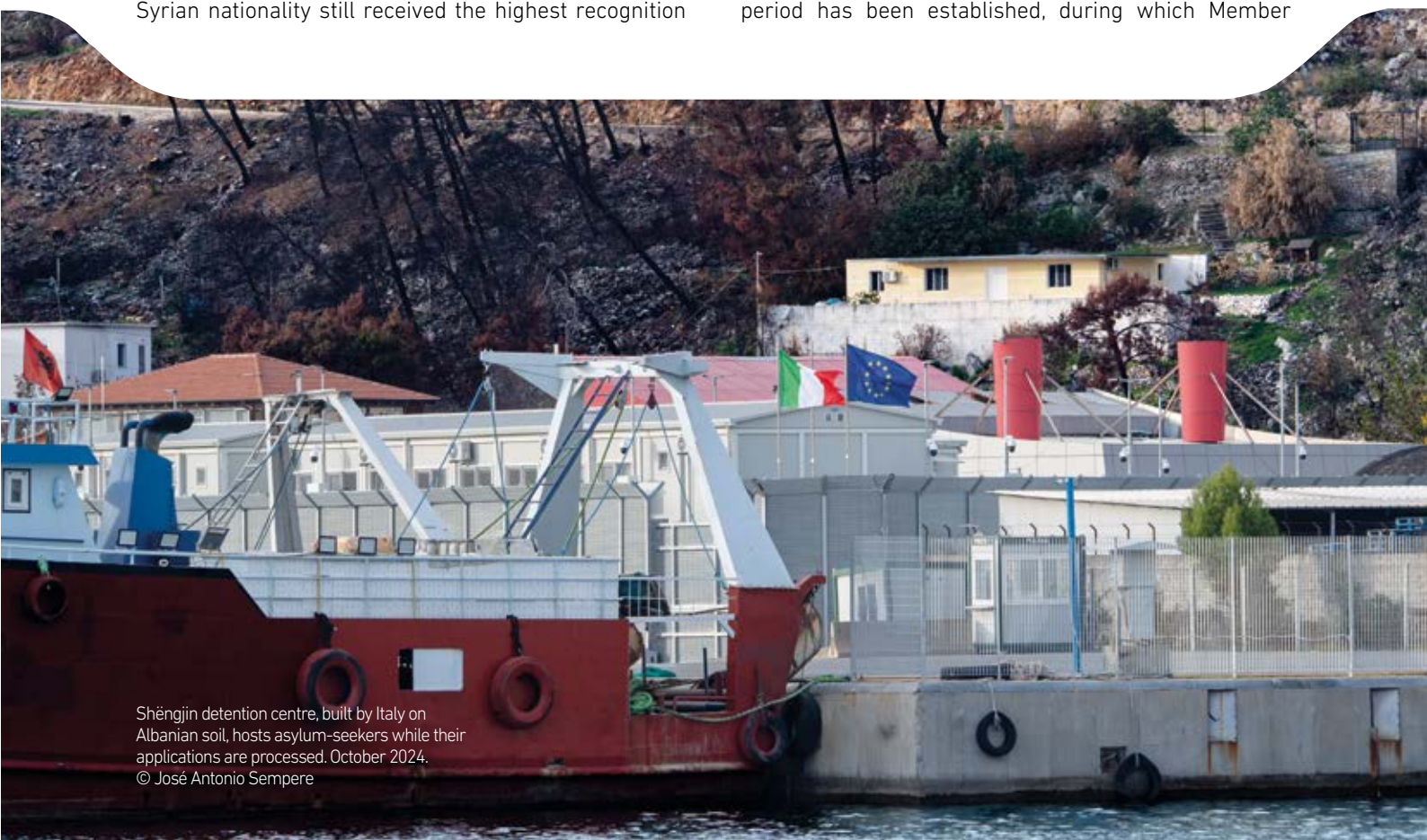
In 2024, the rate of recognition of international protection in the EU was 46.6%, five percentage points higher than in 2023, although there is a growing trend toward granting subsidiary protection instead of refugee status. Syrian nationality still received the highest recognition

rate (90%), although only 28% obtained refugee status. Following the fall of the Assad regime, some countries temporarily suspended the review of Syrian applications. Syria is followed by Mali (84%), Eritrea (81%), and Ukraine (79%). Afghanistan has had a recognition rate over 60% since 2017, with refugee status increasing from 19% in 2019 to 54% in 2024. The rate for Turkey, on the other hand, has dropped from 54% to 17% since 2019.

The EU countries that provided the most protection were Estonia (95.7%), Poland (81.8%), and the Netherlands (75.5%). In Spain, the rate was 18.5%, well below the European average (46.6%).

The total number of applications resolved in the EU increased by 13% (760,926) in 2024. However, by the end of the year, there were still 1,241,660 unresolved cases, mostly from Syria, Colombia, and Venezuela. This is 8.5% more than in 2023. Germany remained the country with the highest number of pending applications (29% of the EU total), followed by Spain (21%), Italy (17%), and France (12%). Together, these four EU countries accounted for 78% of all pending applications at the end of 2024.

The European Pact on Migration and Asylum was approved in May 2024 after more than eight years of negotiation. Due to the complexity and scope of the legislative changes it entails, a two-year implementation period has been established, during which Member



Shëngjin detention centre, built by Italy on Albanian soil, hosts asylum-seekers while their applications are processed. October 2024.
© José Antonio Sempere

States must adapt their national asylum and migration systems. Therefore, it will not be fully applicable until mid-2026. In June 2024, the European Commission presented a Common Implementation Plan divided into ten thematic blocks that details the main obligations for Member States and serves as a roadmap for coherent and coordinated implementation.

Despite multiple calls from civil society organizations for a pact with rights, the outcome was not what we had hoped for. The agreement addresses migration through a security-based approach founded on border control and externalization, which poses significant risks in terms of protection and human rights.

Furthermore, the Pact includes accelerated and border procedures with fewer safeguards to speed up expulsions, thus jeopardizing the individualized assessment of asylum applications and the principle of non-refoulement.

It also fails to address the shortcomings that warranted the reform of the Common Asylum System years ago. In this regard, it maintains the criterion of the country of first entry to determine the State responsible for assessing asylum applications, which continues to place a disproportionate burden on border countries. It also introduces a flexible solidarity mechanism that

The EAP approved in May 2024 enshrines an approach based on containment, external border control, and cooperation with third countries.

allows States to choose between relocations, financial contributions, or other measures.

Faced with these challenges, the implementation process opens a window of opportunity for Spain to adopt a rights-based approach, strengthen reception conditions and integration measures, ensure fair procedures, and implement mechanisms for monitoring and controlling human rights. It is thus important to ensure immediate access to the protection procedure, avoid detention, and establish independent monitoring mechanisms to protect human rights during all processes. It is essential to maintain rights such as the individualized evaluation of asylum applications, free legal assistance, high-quality interpretation in a language the individual understands, as well as the right to information and an effective appeal, among others. Likewise, it is crucial to prioritize saving lives through legal and safe routes, maintaining the possibility of requesting asylum at embassies, making family reunification more flexible, and ensuring rapid screening at borders •

ACCESS TO THE RIGHT TO ASYLUM IN SPAIN

Access to the asylum procedure in Spain is still linked to the possibility of reaching the country, which is increasingly difficult and dangerous, given the lack of sufficient safe legal routes. Such routes continue to be restricted, as exemplified by the introduction of new airport transit visas for nationals of Egypt, Mauritania, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Chad, Senegal, and Kenya. On the other hand, difficulties in accessing the procedure and long processing delays continued. The impossibility of obtaining an appointment to formalize an asylum application and the long wait times, which averaged nine months, left thousands of people in legal limbo. This situation constitutes a violation of the Asylum Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU and the Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU, and contravenes

Articles 18 and 41 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which CEAR already denounced in 2023.

International protection applications at border crossings increased by 2%, with a total of 6,516 applications processed at Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport, mainly from Venezuela, Mauritania, Egypt, Morocco, Ecuador, Colombia, and Sudan. In early 2024, the overcrowding and unsanitary conditions of the airport's international protection applicant lounges, which already existed in 2023, continued, as did delays in processing applications. Given this serious violation of the dignity of the asylum seekers detained there, CEAR called on the Ministry of the Interior to take urgent measures to guarantee the fundamental rights of asylum seekers at the airport, as well as other structural measures to prevent a recurrence of this violation of rights.

The number of asylum applications submitted at Foreigners' Detention Centers (CIE) continued to decline. CEAR consulted the organizations involved at these centers, and the public lawyers reported that there were still obstacles to effectively accessing the right to asylum for detained persons. The situation in these centers has been repeatedly denounced by social organizations and NGOs for violating the rights of the internees. In this regard, the announcement of the planned opening of a new CIE in Algeciras in 2025, with capacity for approximately 507 people, is cause for concern.

Finally, while official figures are not available, there have been reports of new cases of Nigerian and Senegalese stowaways arriving in Spain in dire conditions. As noted in previous reports, we are still waiting for changes to be made to the manual and guidelines for stowaways, specifically regarding the presence of human rights organizations and legal counsel at the first intervention with them. This situation has been going on for years, without an adequate response, despite several complaints filed with the Ombudsman's Office.

Regarding asylum applications filed in 2024, the upward trend continued, reaching a total of 167,366. This is 2.5% more than 2023 and the highest figure on record. It is the second highest figure in the EU, a position Spain occupied for the first time, behind only Germany. Added to this figure are 36,704 new temporary protection grants for displaced Ukrainians, which is 8% more than in 2023.



Of the top ten nationalities of 2024 applicants, six hailed from Latin America, a region marked by political instability, human rights abuses in the fight against drug trafficking, and the actions of non-state armed groups. Venezuela and Colombia remained the top two nationalities of asylum seekers in Spain, with 66,134 and 40,140 applications, respectively, accounting for 63.5% of the total number of applications. Meanwhile, Mali, a country mired in a protracted and escalating conflict, has overtaken Peru as the third leading country of origin of asylum seekers, with a total of 10,673 applications. North and West Africa have been ravaged by protracted armed conflict, political crises, neocolonial interference, and the effects of the climate crisis and constitute the second largest region of origin of applicants in 2024, including Senegal (7,708), Morocco (4,248), and Mauritania (1,890).

Regarding the distribution of applications across Spain, the Community of Madrid (47,439), Andalusia (25,538), and Catalonia (17,488) were at the top, while applications submitted in the Canary Islands decreased slightly. There was a slight increase in applications in Aragon (8,153), the Basque Country (7,729), and Melilla, while applications submitted in Ceuta almost doubled. Most applications (94%) were submitted in the national territory. There was a slight increase in applications submitted at border crossings, primarily at the Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport, as well as Spanish embassies abroad, with family extensions derived to the latter.

As for applicant profiles, we are once again seeing the same profile we encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic: predominantly young men, traveling alone, and primarily from Central and South America, and North and West Africa. This reverses the trend of extended family groups that we observed over the past two years. This may be due to the significant increase in applications submitted by nationals of Mali and Senegal.

In terms of resolutions, 4% more cases were processed than in 2023. The protection rate rose from 12.6% in 2023 to 18.5%. However, this is mainly due to the exponential increase in subsidiary protection decisions, which grew by 198.8% compared to 2023, while decisions recognizing refugee status fell by 13.3%. Despite the rise in the recognition rate, it remains well below the EU average of 46.6%. On the other hand, recognition of humanitarian protection for Venezuelans was maintained. Venezuelans represent almost 98% of those granted this type of protection.

Pending applications in Spain continued to accumulate. In 2024, there were almost 27% more applicants than in 2023, reaching a total of 242,056 applicants awaiting a decision on which their lives depend. The nationalities with the highest number of pending applications continue to be Colombia, with 44,950 unresolved cases; Venezuela, with 13,479; and Peru, with 12,313 •

The impossibility of obtaining an appointment to file an asylum application and the long wait times left thousands of people in legal limbo.





THE SITUATION ON THE SOUTHERN BORDER

In 2024, sea arrivals increased by 10%, mainly in the Canary Islands (+17%, 76.4% of the total) and Balearic Islands (+300%, 9.8% of the total). In the case of the latter, a new route was identified from Somalia, crossing several countries, including Algeria, in a journey that could take up to two years.

In this context, 2024 was a year of renewed urgency, with the humanitarian response continuing under the Emergency Declaration of the Council of Ministers of October 23, 2023, and its five extensions.

The arrival routes to Spanish coasts in 2024 were similar to those of 2023, connecting Senegal, Western Sahara, and Morocco with the Canary Islands, and likewise, Algeria with the Balearic Islands, Levante, and Almería. However, other routes emerged, such as one connecting Somalia and the Balearic Islands, with a crossing in Algeria, and one connecting Mali and the Canary Islands (especially El Hierro), passing through Mauritania.

Regarding the situation in the Canary Islands, in 2024, 46,843 migrants arrived on the Islands' coasts. Most of

the boats arrived in Lanzarote and Fuerteventura from Morocco or Western Sahara. On the other hand, boats from Mauritania and Senegal arrived in Gran Canaria, Tenerife, La Gomera, and El Hierro.

As in 2023, the turbulent political situation in Senegal forced a large number of people, mainly young people, to flee during the first two months of 2024. Following the March 2024 elections, the number of arrivals decreased. Since March, Mali has become the main nationality of those arriving in the Canary Islands, as a result of the escalating conflict and the humanitarian and sociopolitical situation in the country. Malians often crossed Mauritania, from whose shores they reached the Canary Islands. The third most common nationality of people arriving in 2024 was Morocco. These have been the top three nationalities for a decade.

Nationals from Guinea, Ivory Coast, Gambia, and Mauritania also arrived in 2024. The increase in arrivals from Mauritania is surprising, since it was not widely used by its own nationals, despite being an exit route. Likewise, the growing number of people of Asian origin arriving

in the archipelago is striking. According to Spanish Red Cross records, 546 people from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Yemen arrived on the islands in 2024. Regarding the profile of those arriving in the Canary Islands in 2024, 80% were between 18 and 40 years old; the vast majority were men.

The situation of minors deserves special attention. In 2024, one in seven people arriving on the Canary Islands coast was a minor, the vast majority unaccompanied. As of December 15, 2024, the number of minors in reception on the islands reached 5,700, distributed across approximately 86 reception facilities, which are undersized, overpopulated, and of precarious quality. This represents approximately 40% of all unaccompanied minors in reception in Spain.

The Spanish and the Canary Islands governments have taken continuous, intense action to address the situation of unaccompanied migrant children in the Canary Islands, which has included several milestones. In July, a bill to reform the Immigration Law and establish a territorial distribution system was submitted to Congress and rejected.

Subsequently, the Canary Islands government announced the creation of a crisis committee to address the Canary Islands' migration situation and the implementation of an emergency plan to bolster the management structure of the Directorate General for the Protection of Children and Families, with the hiring of 39 new employees. In September 2024, the Canary Islands government approved a new protocol for the reception of migrant minors, with a significant and controversial impact. The protocol was suspended on September 20 by the Canary Islands High Court of Justice (TSJC), which ruled that it could violate and jeopardize the fundamental rights of migrant minors. The protocol was subsequently challenged by the central government before the Constitutional Court, which annulled part of it in its February 2025 ruling. Lastly, in March 2025, a national agreement was reached to establish an accountability mechanism between autonomous communities that would allow for the fair,

dignified, and supportive reception of unaccompanied minors, opening a window of opportunity to make progress in their protection.

Regarding the situation in Ceuta and Melilla, the number of migrant arrivals to Ceuta by land increased by 137% (2,531) in 2024 compared to 2023, despite a 58% drop in sea arrivals (28), according to figures from the Ministry of the Interior. The most common profile was young men in need of international protection. In 2024, the flow of minors was also constant, reaching 953, 11 of them girls, according to Red Cross data. The migrant arrivals were mainly Moroccan nationals, followed by Algerian nationals, but also Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, Tunisian, and Yemeni nationals. It is also worth noting the arrival of at least 41 children who swam to Melilla over at least six hours, presenting various states of hypothermia, skin lacerations from their wetsuits, dehydration, and semi-consciousness.

Lastly, the growing trend of international protection applicants, mostly from Latin America, arriving in Melilla from the peninsula to access the procedure was reinforced. This highlights the collapse of asylum application appointments on the peninsula •

Sea arrivals increased, mainly to the Canary and Balearic Islands, with new routes emerging to both locations.

Eleven years later, hundreds of people continue to demand justice, truth, and reparation for the victims of 'El Tarajal' and their families.
February 2025, Ceuta. © Lourdes Jiménez



RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION

At the end of 2024, the international protection reception system had capacity for 10,663 individuals in the initial assessment and referral phase, 18,103 in the reception phase, 422 in the vulnerable reception phase and 50 in the reinforced vulnerable reception phase, distributed across different centers and facilities and managed by both public entities and third sector entities certified in concerted action management (new model implemented in 2023). On the other hand, the humanitarian assistance program had capacity for at least 10,125 additional vulnerable migrants; these spots have often been used for international protection applicants due to the system's lack of resources.

This was the second year of the new Concerted Action for International Protection model, implemented in 2023, and it was characterized by constant adaptation of the system to the context and management needs.

Among the enduring challenges, we would highlight the frequent changes in planning and the lack of management guidelines with unified instructions and execution criteria, all of which hinder the consolidation

of this new funding and management model. A secure and robust ecosystem is essential for organizations to develop and manage their resources efficiently, ensuring their operations and regulatory compliance, while maintaining the trust of and certainty for the people they serve and other stakeholders. A stable and reliable foundation is also necessary to encourage innovation and develop new intervention and management ideas.

Beyond the overall assessment of the reception and integration system, it is crucial to shine a light on the

Protection applicants with mental health disorders, who had been released from guardianship, and the elderly remained invisible.





realities of those facing additional obstacles due to the intersection of their applicant status with other vulnerable situations: people with mental health disorders, who are no longer eligible for guardianship, and the elderly.

Regarding mental health, the reception system does include identification, early detection, and referral to specific resources. Despite the progress made, the number and duration of specialized places remain insufficient to provide a comprehensive rehabilitation response that leads to true integration in society.

Those who have been released from guardianship under the reception system for minors face various obstacles in their emancipation process after reaching legal age. After leaving the shelters, many of them become

homeless. Those who enter the international protection reception system through the initial assessment phase face obstacles in getting their specific needs met, as these temporary accommodations are intended for stays of a maximum of one month. The situation in the Canary Islands in 2024 was particularly critical in this regard: the protection system for minors was overwhelmed by the arrival of unaccompanied minors, leading to hasty referrals to the reception system due to the lack of alternative accommodation.

Elderly applicants for international protection also find that the challenges they face become exacerbated by factors such as health issues, lack of family or community support networks, language barriers, lack of job opportunities, and premature aging due to conditions in their countries of origin or their migration journey.



Given this situation, the measures set forth in Spanish legislation are either insufficient or difficult to put into practice.

Lastly, we cannot close this year's analysis without specifically mentioning the situation of migrants and applicants for international protection, temporary protection, and stateless persons affected by the floods caused by the DANA (national flood damage) at the end of 2024. According to data from the Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE), 30% of the hate content detected in November was related to the DANA. Furthermore, fear of deportation or possible reprisals led some people to not seek help or support from the authorities, despite their urgent needs.

One of the main barriers to accessing benefits following the DANA was simply meeting the requirements for them, which is difficult for many migrants, such as proof of residence in the affected areas, due to difficulties accessing city registration, or the loss of personal

identification documents during the disaster. In this sense, CEAR and other social organizations submitted a series of proposals to the State Secretariat for Migration and the State Secretariat for Labor, which were not included in the extraordinary measures approved to respond to the population's damages. However, the measure adopted by the Council of Ministers on February 12, 2025, for the temporary regularization of migrant workers and residents in the areas affected by the DANA, valid for one year, is positive. Still, one of the requirements is to provide proof of city registration before November 4, 2024, which is concerning since it would again exclude a large number of affected people •

Migrants affected by the DANA faced administrative obstacles to receiving aid.

A Senegalese fisherman sits on a fishing boat on the shores of N'Dar beach (Senegal). Desperate about the employment situation and the lack of opportunities due to fish scarcity, many young people from Guet N'Dar choose to embark on a boat toward Europe. 2020. © Borja Abargues





The 23rd Annual Report of the Spanish Commission for Refugees (CEAR) analyzes the situation of refugees in the world, the European Union, and, chiefly, Spain.

The global number of forced displacements continued to rise in 2024, reaching 122.6 million people, according to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, and Venezuela were the main countries of origin of refugees. The largest internal forced displacement crisis took place in Sudan, while multiple factors such as political instability, armed conflict, and the climate crisis generated both internal and international displacement in the Sahel. The genocide in Palestine, especially the Gaza Strip, led by Israel with the connivance and silence of the international community, continued to claim thousands of lives, forcibly displace millions, and jeopardize the health, education, and very livelihood of the Palestinian people.

In May 2024, the European Union adopted the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which enshrines an approach that puts the implementation of safe, legal routes and protection on the back burner and instead promotes greater border externalization and the strengthening of return policies. Given the risk these new regulations pose of rolling back rights, it is crucial that Spain adopt a safeguards-based approach centered around people and their rights, bolster reception conditions and inclusion measures, ensure fair procedures and mechanisms for monitoring respect for human rights, and avoid measures that could limit access to protection.

In 2024, Spain received the second-highest number of applications for international protection of all EU countries. The greatest number of applicants came from Venezuela and Colombia, as in 2023, while Mali emerged as the third most common nationality of asylum seekers in 2024. This is due to the escalation of the conflict and humanitarian situation in the Sahel region. Nonetheless, Spain was also one of the EU countries to grant the least protection, with a recognition rate of 18.5%, compared to the EU average of 46.6%. Asylum seekers continued to face obstacles to accessing the procedure, specifically due to trouble securing an asylum appointment.

The number of arrivals to the Canary Islands increased, albeit less than anticipated, thus prolonging the reception crisis, especially for unaccompanied children and adolescents, to an alarming extent. The response from the Spanish and Canary Islands governments to find a solution to this situation has been marked by several milestones. In March 2025, an agreement was reached to establish a solidarity-based mechanism for distributing minors, opening a window of opportunity to provide effective protection, pending its practical implementation.

Lastly, there were numerous advances during this second year of implementation of the concerted action model for reception and integration, although some challenges continued. Applicants in additional vulnerable situations, such as those with mental health disorders, who are no longer eligible for guardianship, and the elderly, continued to face additional, invisible obstacles, requiring specific attention and a response appropriate to each of their specific needs.

From the prologue by Carlos Berzosa,
CEAR president