**An exceptional year for immigration in 2015 — the number of asylum seekers grew nearly tenfold from the previous year**

*The number of asylum applications filed in Finland in 2015 was higher than the total figure for the previous ten years combined. This was reflected in both the reception system for asylum seekers and the public dialogue on immigration.*

The year 2015 was an exceptional one from the perspective of humanitarian migration. The number of asylum seekers who entered Finland (32,476) grew nearly tenfold from the previous year. The bulk of the influx occurred in the autumn. The month with the highest number of arrivals was September with 10,836. This represents nearly a 27-fold increase compared to September 2014. The extraordinary nature of the situation is also illustrated by the fact that the number of asylum applications filed during the year was higher than the total figure for the previous ten years combined (2006–2015: 30,975 asylum applications).

This information is reported in the recently completed statistical review of the European Migration Network (EMN) and the annual report on migration and asylum policy.

“The number of asylum seekers who entered Finland in 2015 was a national record. Newly established reception centres meant that the impacts of the influx were reflected throughout the country, including towns that had barely any foreign residents previously,” says **Rafael Bärlund**, Senior Adviser at the European Migration Network, who was responsible for the statistical review.

Also noteworthy is the large number of unaccompanied minors, which, at 3,024, was 15 times higher than the previous year.

“As the majority of these unaccompanied minors are likely to remain in Finland, it is important for municipalities to bear their responsibility and offer municipal placement to these young people,” says **Suvi Tiainen**, the Senior Adviser who produced the EMN policy report.

The rapid growth in the number of asylum seekers was particularly reflected in the reception system for asylum seekers. The need to accommodate such a large number of arrivals meant that over a hundred reception centres were established in Finland over a short period of time in the autumn. The new situation also led to a considerable increase in the number of personnel at the Finnish Immigration Service, and the Service has established new regional offices.

As the majority of the asylum applications received in 2015 were not decided on during the year, the influx in the autumn is not yet reflected in the total number of asylum decisions made.

**No change in the number of residence permits**

The EMN 2015 statistical review and the report on migration and asylum policy in Finland in 2015 shed light on the impacts of the asylum situation in the various sectors concerned. They also provide an overall view of Finnish migration policy and immigration in Finland, which, in spite of everything that happened during the year, comprises much more than just asylum policy.

The number of residence permits issued in 2015 was largely unchanged from the previous year.

“Immigration to Finland on the basis of employment, family reasons or studying, showed no significant change from the previous years,” Bärlund explains.

EMN Senior Adviser Suvi Tiainen also highlights the polarisation of the climate around the public dialogue on immigration.

“Everyone is expected to have an opinion on immigration, and views have become more extreme.”

**A unique overview of migration in Finland**

EMN produces an annual report on migration and asylum policy as well as a statistical review. The policy report describes the development of migration and asylum policy and presents annual statistics. The annual statistical review is compiled from statistics provided by the Finnish Immigration Service, Police and Finnish Border Guard as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

It is the only pair of publications in Finland that presents compiled information on development trends in migration-related matters. The policy report offers advanced information on phenomena, which the statistical review discusses in the light of figures.

**Links to studies:**

**Annual migration and asylum policy report – Finland 2015**

**EMN’s statistical publication – Key figures on immigration 2015**

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