



The Dublin system in the first half of 2017

Key figures from selected European countries

August 2017



The Dublin system for allocating responsibility for asylum seekers in Europe is consistently described as the “cornerstone” of the Common European Asylum System,¹ yet continues to operate in considerable opacity. Dublin data remain a thorny challenge in the EU’s statistical practice.

Although Member States are bound by the Migration Statistics Regulation to submit annual statistics on the use of the Dublin Regulation to the European Commission,² Eurostat consistently fails to publish those on time. Figures for 2016, which countries had to submit by the end of March 2017, were not available by early July 2017 when the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published its annual asylum report,³ and are still missing for several Member States at the time of writing.⁴

The information gap created by the unavailability of up-to-date data in Eurostat is palpable, given that most countries’ asylum authorities refrain from proactively releasing information on the Dublin system in their national statistical reports. Some, like the **United Kingdom**, have justified this approach on the basis that “Eurostat, the EU’s statistics agency, regularly publishes Member State figures.”⁵ A few exceptions include the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) in **Switzerland** and the Asylum Service in **Greece**, which publish monthly figures on the application of the Dublin Regulation, although in the case of Greece this only concerns outgoing requests and transfers.⁶ **Croatia** publishes quarterly statistics including figures on Dublin transfers and **Austria** publishes succinct information in its Federal Agency for Immigration and Asylum (BFA) biannual reports,⁷ while **Germany** releases detailed statistics in response to parliamentary questions.

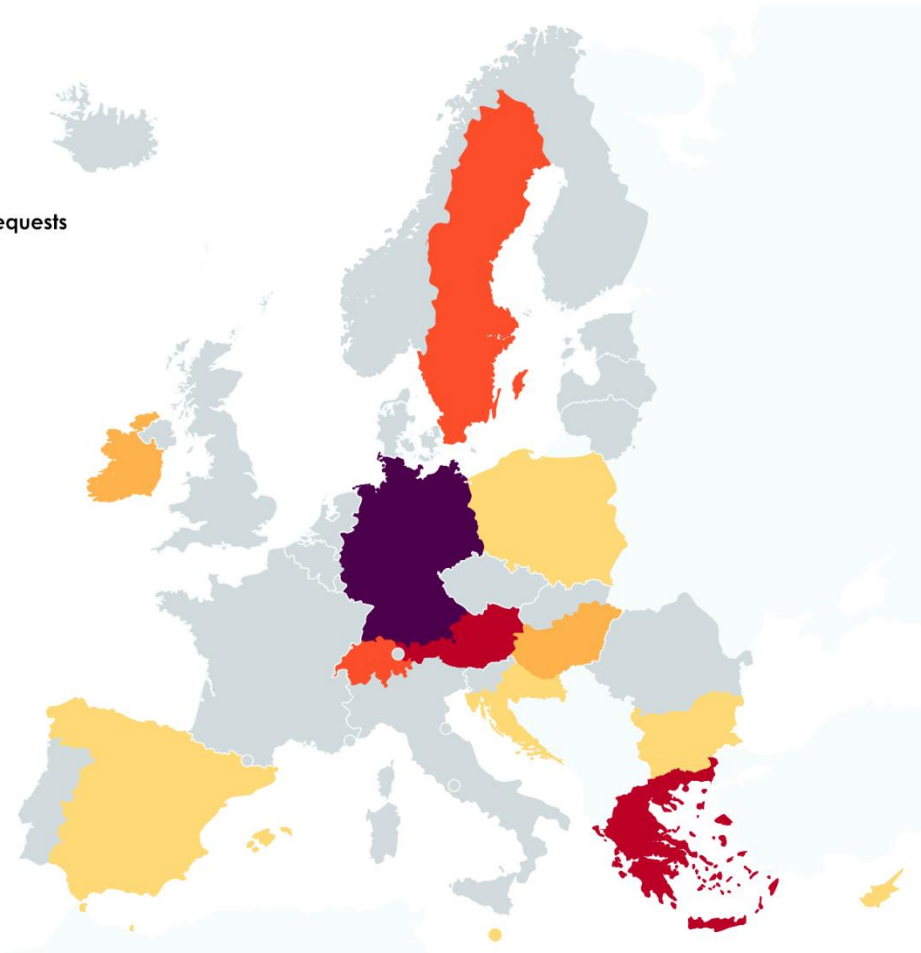
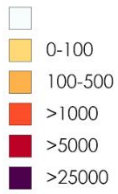
Against that backdrop, timely information on the implementation of the Dublin system across the continent is mainly provided by national authorities to civil society. This statistical update contains figures for the first half of 2017 from 13 countries covered by the Asylum Information Database (AIDA).⁸ Far from being an exhaustive account of the application of the Dublin Regulation, this update aims to provide a brief snapshot of current trends in procedures and actual transfers within Europe.

Outgoing Dublin requests and transfers

Wide differences persist in the rigour with which European countries use the Dublin Regulation in the asylum process. As illustrated in the map below, the number of outgoing Dublin requests issued in the first half of 2017 ranges from 5 in one EU Member State to nearly 30,000 in another:

¹ See e.g. European Commission, *Proposal for [a Dublin IV Regulation]*, COM(2016) 270, 4 May 2016, 4.
² Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 of 11 July 2007 on Community statistics on migration and international protection, OJ 2007 L199/23, Article 4(4).
³ EASO, *Annual report on the situation of asylum in the EU+ 2016*, July 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2tPq48p>, 30.
⁴ See e.g. Eurostat, *migr_dubri*: as of 18 August 2017, statistics for 13 countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Portugal, UK, Iceland and Switzerland) were not available.
⁵ United Kingdom House of Commons, Asylum: Written questions 59796 to 59799, 12 January 2017, and Reply of 16 January 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kmM6dc>.
⁶ SEM, *Statistiques en matière d’asile*, available in French at: <http://bit.ly/2j05MnE>; Greek Asylum Service, *Statistical data*, available at: <http://bit.ly/2w8qwPW>.
⁷ Croatian Asylum Department, *Statistički pokazatelji tražitelja međunarodne zaštite*, available in Croatian at: <http://bit.ly/2vLFicp>; BFA, *Statistiken*, available in German at: <http://bit.ly/2uW1zDo>.
⁸ Figures for 2017 were not made available in Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK.

Outgoing Dublin requests



Germany remains by far the primary operator of Dublin procedures, with a total 29,378 outgoing requests issued during the first half of 2017. The majority were sent to the following countries:



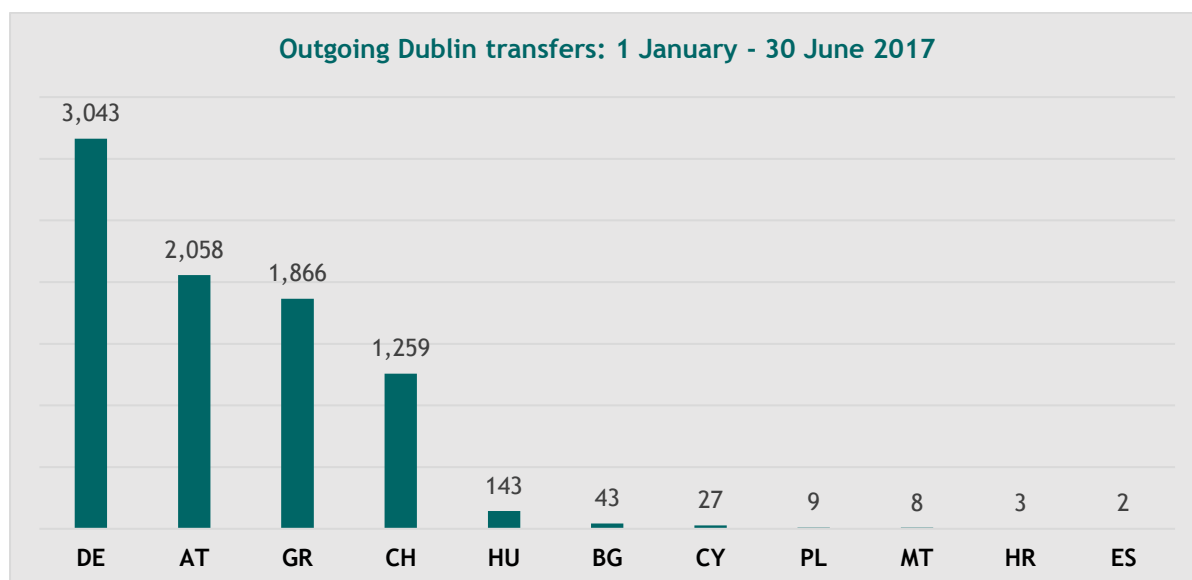
Source: Federal Government of Germany, Reply to parliamentary question by The Left, 18/13428, 28 August 2017: <http://bit.ly/2wke0Mp>, 4-5.

The majority of outgoing requests by Germany – 19,066 out of 29,378 – were issued on the basis of a Eurodac ‘hit’ indicating that the asylum seekers concerned had applied for international protection or irregularly entered or stayed in another country.⁹

Other main countries initiating Dublin procedures through outgoing requests during this period include **Greece** (7,267), **Austria** (6,000), followed by **Switzerland** (4,232) and **Sweden** (1,884), which were also among the main senders last year.¹⁰ One notable exception is **Hungary**, which only issued 323 outgoing requests in the first half of 2017, compared to 5,619 requests in the entire year 2016. The sharp decrease in Dublin procedures has likely resulted from a change of practice in December 2016, whereby the Hungarian Immigration and Asylum Office stopped issuing requests to Greece.¹¹

Few procedures have been initiated by other AIDA countries, counting less than 150 requests in the case of **Ireland**, less than 100 in **Bulgaria**, **Cyprus** and **Poland**, and less than 50 in **Malta**, **Croatia** and **Spain**.

With regard to actual transfers, the first half of 2017 reveals similar patterns to previous years as regards the main countries operating the Dublin system. Countries such as **Germany**, **Austria**, **Greece** and **Switzerland** implemented most outgoing transfers of asylum seekers, far ahead of other states:



Source: Annex I.

⁹ Federal Government of Germany, Reply to parliamentary question by The Left, 18/13428, 28 August 2017, available in German at: <http://bit.ly/2wke0Mp>, 2.

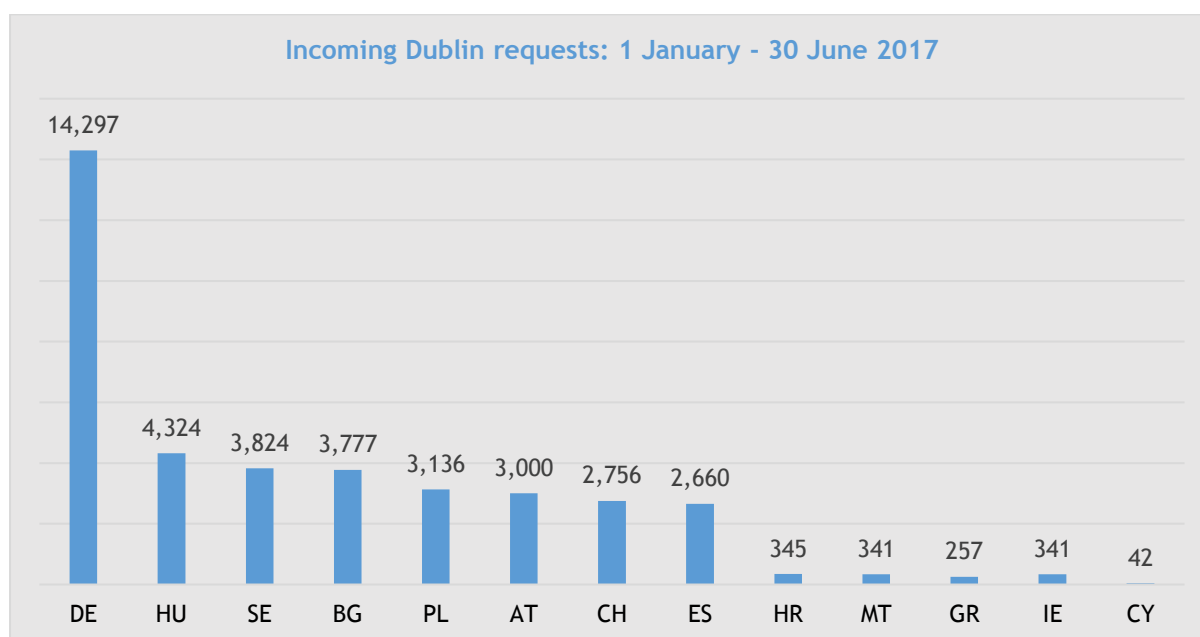
¹⁰ ECRE, *The Dublin system in 2016: Key figures from selected European countries*, March 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2umDMMr>.

¹¹ AIDA, Country Report Hungary, 2016 Update, February 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2k3zGE9>, 30.

Incoming Dublin requests and transfers

The main destinations of Dublin procedures and transfers seem to remain stable overall. **Italy** was the main addressee of Dublin requests sent by Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden and Malta this year, while **Germany** received a total of 14,297 incoming requests, mostly originating from France (5,043), Greece (3,467) and the Netherlands (1,624).¹²

Several countries have received between 2,500 and 4,500 incoming requests, while others have received no more than a few hundred, as illustrated in the table below:



Source: Annex II.

The incoming Dublin procedure in **Germany** has been heavily debated in recent months due to a change of practice vis-à-vis requests from **Greece**. The number of requests issued by Greece dropped from 2,514 in the first quarter of 2017 to 953 in the second quarter, as did the number of actual transfers – from 837 to 379.¹³ All of these transfers concerned family reunification or the application of the dependent persons and humanitarian clauses.¹⁴ The reduction of Dublin procedures stems from a controversial agreement between the two countries to slow down the rate of family reunification.¹⁵

While Germany has received numerous requests from other countries such as **France** (5,043), the **Netherlands** (1,624) and **Austria** (937), it is likely that these concern a different category of responsibility criteria than those issued by **Greece**. As of August 2017, as many as 3,100 people were awaiting transfer to Germany.¹⁶

¹² Federal Government of Germany, Reply to parliamentary question by The Left, 18/13428, 28 August 2017, available in German at: <http://bit.ly/2wke0Mp>, 17-18.

¹³ *Ibid.*

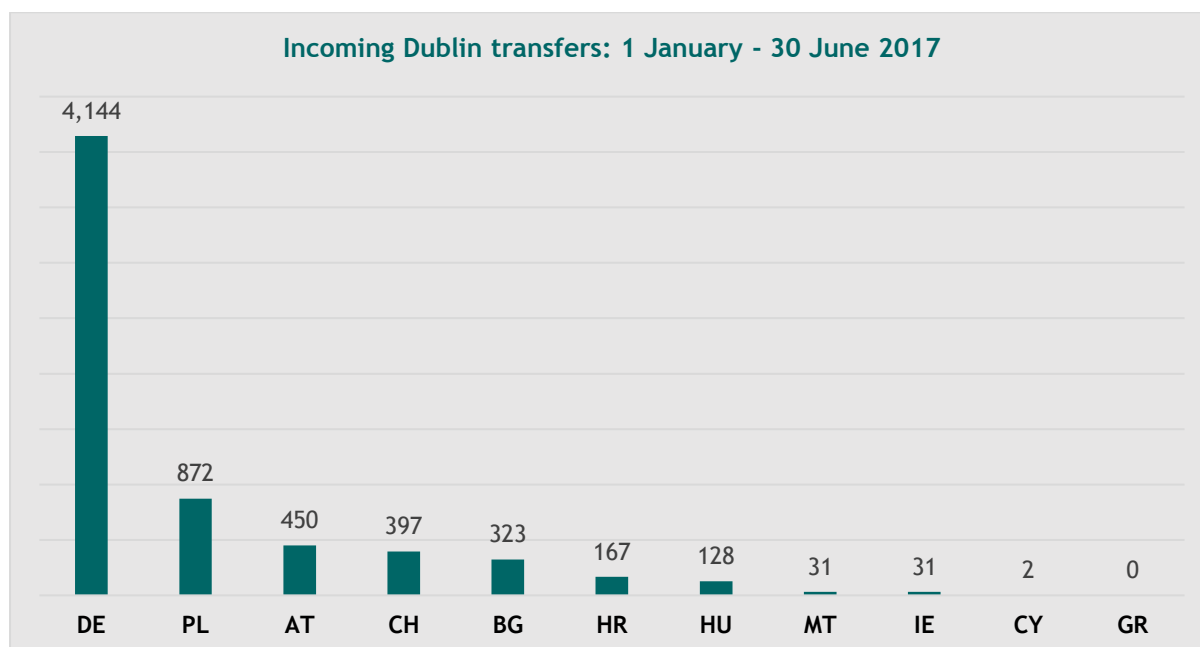
¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ AIDA, 'Greece/Germany: Cap on transfers under Dublin family provisions', 12 May 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2tpuMZp>. See further a Joint NGO Action at: <http://bit.ly/2elsyBO>; European Parliament, Written question to the Commission by MEP Nikos Androulakis, 30 May 2017, and the Reply of Commissioner Avramopoulos, 1 August 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2x8HsFR>.

¹⁶ Federal Government of Germany, Reply to parliamentary question by The Left, 18/13428, 28 August 2017, available in German at: <http://bit.ly/2wke0Mp>, 18.

The situation of **Hungary** also merits closer consideration. While it remains among the main addressees of Dublin requests so far in 2017, Hungary has received far less requests this year compared to last year; when it counted as many as 26,698.¹⁷ Its main incoming requests have been sent by **Germany** (1,915), **Austria** (1,091) and **France** (739).

In relation to actual transfers, **Germany** again remains far ahead of other European countries and has received more asylum seekers (4,144) than those sent to other countries (3,043):



Source: Annex II.

The 'efficiency' question: rate of outgoing transfers / requests

One crucial question in the operation of the Dublin system remains the implementation of actual transfers following the trigger of Dublin procedures. There may be various factors affecting the realisation of a transfer, such as administrative capacity, coordination between authorities, as well as the degree of cooperation on the part of the applicant.¹⁸

The rate of outgoing Dublin transfers per requests varied significantly between European countries last year, ranging from 3.8% to 45.5%. So far this year, sizeable disparities remain:

Rate of outgoing Dublin transfers per requests in selected countries: 2016-2017						
*	1 January – 31 December 2016			1 January – 30 June 2017		
	Requests	Transfers	Rate	Requests	Transfers	Rate
DE	55,690	3,968	7.1%	29,378	3,043	10.3%
AT	21,293	2,582	12.1%	6,000	2,058	34.3%
GR	4,886	946	19.3%	7,267	1,866	25.7%
CH	15,203	3,750	24.6%	4,232	1,259	29.7%

¹⁷ ECRE, *The Dublin system in 2016: Key figures from selected European countries*, March 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2umDMMr>.

¹⁸ European Commission, *Proposal for a Dublin IV Regulation*, COM(2016) 270, 4 May 2016, 10.

BG	134	16	12%	86	43	50%
CY	157	62	39.4%	81	27	33.3%
HU	5,619	213	3.8%	323	143	44.3%
PL	180	82	45.5%	88	9	10.2%
MT	120	12	10%	46	8	17.4%
HR	57	12	21%	18	3	16.7%
ES	10	2	20%	5	2	40%

Source: ECRE, Dublin Update 2016: <http://bit.ly/2umDMMr>; Annex I.

Despite persisting differences in the implementation rate of Dublin transfers across the continent, available figures show an improvement in the rate of transfers to requests for most countries operating the Dublin Regulation. While the rate of **Germany** rose from 7.1% to 10.3%, **Austria** marked a substantial increase from 12.1% to 34.3%. Germany and Austria have transferred almost as many asylum seekers in the first semester of the year as they did in the entire year 2016, while **Greece** has transferred nearly double the number of persons transferred last year.

Useful, albeit limited, explanations of this increase could point to different factors. On the one hand, it should be borne in mind that Dublin transfers carried out in the first half of 2017 may also concern procedures initiated in previous years. On the other hand, the rate of outgoing transfers per requests may also be affected by changing patterns in the number of asylum claims lodged in European countries. Countries such as **Austria, Hungary** and **Switzerland** seem to have reduced the number of outgoing Dublin requests sent to their counterparts, possibly due to the drop in asylum applications registered so far in 2017 compared to previous years. To illustrate, during the first half of this year these three countries received 12,490 (Austria), 9,123 (Switzerland) and 1,979 (Hungary) applications respectively, compared to 25,691 (Austria), 14,277 (Switzerland) and 22,491 (Hungary) applications during the first half of 2016.¹⁹ Yet in the case of **Germany**, the substantial drop in the number of claims registered²⁰ has not translated into a decrease in Dublin procedures.

¹⁹ Austrian Federal Ministry of Interior: <http://bit.ly/2vs6V8O>; Swiss State Secretariat for Migration: <http://bit.ly/2vrZpL6>; Hungarian Immigration and Asylum Office: <http://bit.ly/2eHsWuQ>; AIDA, *Admissibility, responsibility and safety in European asylum procedures*, September 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2plAyqS>, 36.

²⁰ Germany registered 111,616 applications in the first half of 2017, compared to 396,947 in the first half of 2016: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF): <http://bit.ly/2sOIhtJ>.

Annex I – Outgoing Dublin requests and transfers by receiving country: 1 January – 30 June 2017

	Outgoing requests							Outgoing transfers						
	Total	First country		Second country		Third country		Total	First country		Second country		Third country	
AT	6,000	IT	:	DE	:	BG	:	2,058	:	:	:	:	:	:
BG	86	DE	54	UK	9	AT	5	43	DE	40	MT	2	SE	1
CY	81	UK	29	DE	15	SE	13	27	DE	12	UK	6	LT	4
DE	29,378	IT	10,957	HU	2,071	FR	2,022	3,043	IT	906	PL	539	SE	185
ES	5	DE	3	IT	1	DK	1	2	DE	2	-	-	-	-
GR	7,267	DE	4,842	SE	543	AT	404	1,866	:	:	:	:	:	:
HR	18	BG	15	DE	1	SE	1	3	DE	2	SI	1	-	-
HU	323	:	:	:	:	:	:	143	:	:	:	:	:	:
IE	148	UK	66	DE	21	IT	13	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
MT	46	IT	19	ES	7	SE	6	8	SE	6	DE	1	FR	1
PL	88	DE	26	RO	9	FR	9	9	DE	5	BE	1	RO	0
SE	1,884	IT	347	DE	288	LT	149	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
CH	4,232	IT	2,240	DE	673	FR	267	1,259	IT	539	DE	379	FR	72

Figures for FR, IT, NL, UK are not available.

Figures for HU as of 26 June 2017.

Figures for AT outgoing requests are approximate.

Annex II – Incoming Dublin requests and transfers by sending country: 1 January – 30 June 2017

	Incoming requests							Incoming transfers						
	Total	First country		Second country		Third country		Total	First country		Second country		Third country	
AT	3,000	DE	:	FR	:	GR	:	450	:	:	:	:	:	:
BG	3,777	DE	863	FR	857	AT	727	323	HU	87	DE	68	AT	61
CY	42	DE	11	FR	8	AT	5	2	DE	1	AT	1	-	-
DE	14,297	FR	5,043	GR	3,467	NL	1,624	4,144	GR	1,216	NL	606	FR	466
ES	2,660	DE	815	FR	723	BE	245	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
GR	257	DE	210	CH	23	BE	9	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
HR	345	DE	110	SI	80	AT	41	167	DE	97	AT	40	CH	8
HU	4,324	DE	1,915	AT	1,091	FR	739	128	AT	79	DE	30	CH	11
IE	123	FR	9	DE	7	GR	4	30	UK	8	SE	5	FR	4
MT	341	DE	150	FR	39	AT	34	31	SE	8	BG	5	AT	4
PL	3,136	DE	1,757	FR	659	AT	213	872	DE	583	AT	113	FR	35
SE	3,824	DE	1,235	FR	807	GR	328	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
CH	2,756	DE	1,249	FR	703	NL	159	397	DE	168	GR	55	AT	44

Figures for FR, IT, NL, UK are not available.

Figures for HU as of 26 June 2017.

Figures for AT as of 31 July 2017. Figures for AT incoming requests are approximate.