

An Binse um Achomhairc i dtaobh Cosaint Idirnáisiúnta The International Protection Appeals Tribunal

International Protection Appeals Tribunal

Annual Report 2024

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Mission Statement

The **mission** of the **International Protection Appeals Tribunal** is to provide an effective remedy within the international protection system that is of the highest quality and to do so in the most efficient, sustainable and user-focused manner, ensuring compliance with national, EU and international law.



Foreword by Tribunal Chairperson <mark>Hilkka Becker</mark>

It is with great pleasure and pride that I present this Annual Report to the Minister for Justice, Mr Jim O'Callaghan TD.

Throughout 2024, the International Protection Appeals Tribunal has continued to make a significant contribution to the international protection system here in Ireland, making the system more efficient and ensuring its consistency with fairness and natural justice, and performing the judicial scrutiny function provided for in the Asylum Procedures Directive 2005/85, the Dublin III Regulation and the Reception Conditions Directive.

Modernisation measures, including the move to fully digital international protection appeal files and measures to reduce the rate of postponements of Tribunal hearings, introduced through the initiatives of the Tribunal administration teams led by Registrar George Sinclair, in collaboration with Tribunal Members, have enabled the Tribunal to further increase its accessibility and productivity.

Resulting from a substantial increase in applications for international protection being made in Ireland since 2022, the Tribunal has seen a further significant increase in appeals coming to it in 2024, rising by another 85% to 8,835 new appeals, compared to 4,775 in the previous year.

I am pleased to say that, maximising the use of its resources to meet that pressure, the Tribunal exceeded its projected output of completed appeals in 2024 to a total of 3,098, an increase of over 82% from 1,701 completed appeals in 2023 and that, for appeals submitted and decided in 2024, the median processing times increased only marginally, to 6 months. However, it must be noted that the overall processing times for all appeals has now risen to 10 months, a development that has resulted from the combination of a near 650% increase in appeals reaching the Tribunal over the past 24 months and resources not being in place early enough to meet the resulting demand.

The Tribunal's senior management team works closely with Department of Justice in an effort to ensure that the Tribunal has and can retain a sufficient number of Tribunal Members and administrative and legal support staff, as well as purpose designed accommodation to ensure adequate capacity to process the pending and expected numbers of appeals. The resourcing of the Tribunal to a proportionate equivalent to the staff numbers and decision-makers in the International Protection Office, along with the Tribunal's own efforts to further increase efficiencies, is essential so that the Tribunal may be in a position to meet the demand arising from the further increase of appeals foreseen in 2025 and beyond, while striving to maintain its standard of high-quality decision-making in line with national and EU law requirements.

With thanks to all my colleagues within the Tribunal, colleagues in the Department of Justice, the International Protection Office, the state agency sector and in the legal profession for their collaboration and support throughout the year, I look forward to another busy year ahead.



Hillen Bedur

Hilkka Becker Chairperson

1. Introduction

In 2024, the number of applications for international protection continued to be at an unprecedented level, with 18,561 applications lodged at the International Protection Office, resulting in a caseload of 22,548 pending applications for international protection at the end of the year. Based on past experience, it can therefore be expected that in addition to the 9,705 appeals that were pending before the International Protection Appeals Tribunal at the end of 2024, upwards of 16,000 appeals may reach the Tribunal in 2025, resulting in an estimated overall caseload of 25,000 for the year ahead.

Unlike last year, this trend is not reflected throughout the EU+, where applications for international protection decreased by over one tenth, remaining below the 2023 figures overall¹. However, at the end of 2024, there was a near-record number of cases awaiting a first instance decision across the EU+².

As a result of the continuing upward trend of international protection applications being made in Ireland, the number of appeals reaching the Tribunal increased by another 85% to 8,835 new appeals in 2024, compared to 4,775 having been submitted in the previous year. This constitutes an increase of near 650% over a 24 months period. And while further efficiency increases did enable the Tribunal to deliver 3,098 completed appeals – an increase of 82% over the previous year – it is of concern that despite the best effort being made with the resources available to it, the Tribunal closed the year with 9,705 appeals on hand.

On a positive note, for appeals submitted and decided in 2024, the median processing times increased only marginally to 6 months. However, it must be noted that the overall processing times for all appeals has now risen to 10 months, a development that is resulting from the combination of a near 650% increase in appeals reaching the Tribunal over the past 24 months and resources not being in place early enough to meet the resulting demand.

The Tribunal remains committed to maintaining the high quality of its decision-making, with the rate of judicial review challenges against its decisions remaining steadily below 7%. Moreover, 2025 will see the very welcome appointment of additional part-time and whole-time Tribunal Members, as well as the provision of legal researchers to the Tribunal to increase its research and knowledge management capacity.

The Tribunal will make every effort to train, onboard and retain newly appointed Members. It will be the first time in the history of the Tribunal and its predecessor, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, that the qualification requirement for ordinary part-time and whole time Tribunal Members will be two years post-qualification, having been reduced from five years by way of legislative amendment in 2024, and this is likely to require a review of and further investment in the Tribunal's training provision.

The majority of hearings conducted before the Tribunal in 2024 continued to take place remotely by way of remote audio video technology, a vital step in improving access to the legal remedy provided by the Tribunal in line with national law and Ireland's obligations under EU law.

However, as last year, the Tribunal continued to record a high number of hearing postponements. These can arise for a variety of reasons. In the majority of cases, the postponement was granted

¹ https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/eu-asylum-applications-decrease-11-percent-in-2024.

² https://euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-annual-analysis.

at the request of an appellant or their legal representative for a number of reasons, including technical issues preventing the appellant from participating in an audio video hearing, the need for additional time for a legal representative to prepare for the hearing or to obtain relevant documents, or situations in which the legal representative was unavailable on the date scheduled. The Tribunal will continue to work with its stakeholders to reduce the number of postponements, further increasing efficiencies, so as to ensure that hearings are not unduly delayed.

In order to engage and strengthen the Tribunal's synergies across the international protection ecosystem, the Tribunal Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons, Tribunal Registrar and Members of the Tribunal administration team participate regularly in stakeholder engagement with a view, in particular, to further improving the services provided by it. This includes regular engagement with the Tribunal Users' Group, consisting of two barristers nominated by the Bar Council of Ireland and two solicitors nominated by the Law Society of Ireland and, since 2024, also includes a representative of the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugee as well as a representative of the Irish Refugee Council – Independent Law Centre.

The Tribunal played an active role in stakeholder collaboration also in relation to the Department of Justice's International Protection Office Modernisation Programme, through its input to consultations on the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and its participation in Justice Sector Agencies' meetings, as well as in direct engagement with the Department of Justice, other State agencies, the Tribunal Users' Group, the wider legal profession, academia and the IGO and NGO sectors.

Moreover, the Tribunal Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons and Members of the Tribunal are actively involved in EU and international networks of courts and tribunals, such as the International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges (IARMJ) and the European Union Agency for Asylum's (EUAA) judicial experts' pool, making significant contributions to professional development workshops and expert panels organised by the Agency. The Tribunal Chairperson acts as the national contact point for the EUAA Network of Courts and Tribunals from all EU+ countries, as well as the following key stakeholders: The Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights, International and European judicial associations: the



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IARMJ and the Association of European Administrative Judges, other stakeholders, such as the European Judicial Training Network, the Academy of European Law, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Tribunal Registrar is actively involved in the EUAA Registries Platform initiative and has been invited to participate in the Platform's Steering Committee which commenced work in early 2024.

Structure of the Annual Report

Following on from the introduction above, this report will set out the establishment, jurisdiction and membership of the Tribunal in Section 2, provide an overview of the Tribunal's standards and practices in Section 3 and set out actions undertaken to ensure quality and consistency of decision making in Section 4.

The report then moves to focus on the administration of the Tribunal, starting with an executive summary provided by the Tribunal Registrar, and sets out the Tribunal staff levels, staff development and training as well as modernisation measures undertaken by the Tribunal in Section 5. The report provides the Tribunal's financial report for the year 2024 in Section 6 and provides a detailed statistical overview of the Tribunal's work in the concluding Section 7.

Staff 79 Appeals Tribunal Received **Members** 8835 105 International Protection **Appeals** Tribunal 2024 Audio Video **Expenditure** Hearings €5,817,233.33 1112 **Appeals** Completed 3098

The Tribunal at a Glance in 2024

2. About the Tribunal

2.1. Establishment and Jurisdiction

Part 10 of the International Protection Act 2015 (hereinafter 'the 2015 Act') provided for the establishment of the Tribunal as an appellate body providing an effective remedy for applicants for international protection in respect of negative recommendations of international protection officers. The functions of the Members and staff of the Tribunal are also set out in Part 10 of the 2015 Act.

The 2015 Act, especially Parts 2, 3 (as amended), 4 and 6, set out the various legal rules within which the Tribunal operates when dealing with the appeals that are its predominant concern. These legal rules have been supplemented by the Dublin System Regulations 2018 in respect of appeals concerning transfer decisions made by an international protection officer.

The Tribunal's jurisdictional mandate has also been added to by the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018, under which the Tribunal is the judicial authority for determining appeals from decisions made by officials of the Department of Justice, Department of Social Protection, or Department of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth, as the case may be.



All in all, the Tribunal's current legislative mandate is to determine appeals from first instance decisions in respect of:

- International protection refugee status and subsidiary protection;
- Inadmissibility of an application for international protection;
- Consent to make a subsequent application for international protection;
- Transfer decisions under the European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018; and
- Reception conditions in the international protection process, including labour market access.

2.2. Membership of the Tribunal

In 2024, the Tribunal's Membership consisted of:

- the Chairperson, Hilkka Becker,
- two Deputy Chairpersons, Cindy Carroll and Shauna Gillan,

and a total number of three whole-time Members, and 99 part-time Members. The latter are engaged on contracts for services to the Minister for Justice, whereas the Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons and whole-time Members are engaged on contracts of service. All Tribunal Members are appointed for an initial five-year term and may be reappointed for a second term not exceeding five years. Ordinary Members of the Tribunal consider appeals and make decisions in respect of the various matters that come before the Tribunal.

All Members are appointed by the Minister for Justice pursuant to section 62 of the International Protection Act 2015, based on selection by the Public Appointments Service, after holding a competition under section 47 of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Acts. This process ensures that Members have the required skills and expertise in respect of international protection and human rights law, and decision-making.

All Members receive extensive induction training when they are first appointed and all engage in regular professional development training throughout every year as set out in more detail further below in this report.

The Chairperson of the Tribunal is tasked with ensuring that the functions of the Tribunal are performed efficiently and that the business assigned to each Member is disposed of as expeditiously as may be consistent with fairness and natural justice.

In addition to the Chairperson and two Deputy Chairpersons, the Tribunal had a total of three whole-time Members and 99 part-time Members during the year. There were 10 departures from the Tribunal and 43 new part-time Member appointments in 2024.

On the 31st of December 2024, the Tribunal had a Chairperson, two Deputy Chairpersons, three whole-time Members and 89 part-time Members.

3. The Tribunal's Standards and Practices

3.1. The Tribunal's Strategy Statement 2024-2026

The Tribunal's strategy statement for 2024-2026 is available on the Tribunal's website **www.protectionappeals.ie**



For the year 2024, the Tribunal's mission remained to provide an effective remedy within the international protection system that is of the highest quality and to do so in the most efficient, sustainable and user-focused manner, ensuring compliance with national, EU and international law.

And in that regard the Tribunal focused on the following strategic priorities throughout the year:

- 1. Ensure quality and consistency of decision-making.
- 2. Optimise efficiency of appeal processing.
- 3. Deliver a user-focused appeal service.
- 4. Communicate effectively with service users and other stakeholders.
- 5. Engage and strengthen the Tribunal's synergies across the international protection ecosystem.

3.2. Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

All staff members have completed training on the Tribunal's Public Sector Duty under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

By the very nature of its work in the provision of an effective remedy for the purposes of Article 47 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the issue of human rights is an integral part of the Tribunal. In its Strategy Statement for 2024 – 2026, the Tribunal is committed to 'Fairness, Transparency, Efficiency and Respect'. The staff of the Tribunal are civil servants and accordingly, in their interests, the Tribunal is cognisant of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy of the Department of Justice.

The Tribunal's PSD policy is available on its website.

3.3. Administrative Practice Note

In order to increase the transparency of the Tribunal's work and to make it more accessible to its customers, the Tribunal has published an Administrative Practice Note, which is available on the Tribunal's website, and updated on a regular basis to reflect relevant changes in legislation and practice.

The most recent **Administrative Practice Note** (APN) was published in October 2024 and appellants, their legal representatives and presenting officers are advised to keep themselves apprised of any changes, which will be noted in the 'News' section of the Tribunal website.

By setting out this APN, the Tribunal expects that all parties appearing before the Tribunal will be aware of its procedures. All parties appearing before the Tribunal should be aware that a failure to comply with the provisions of the APN may lead to unnecessary delays in the processing and determining of appeals, and may be considered a failure to co-operate within the meaning of sections 27 and 45 of the International Protection Act 2015.

In accordance with the Tribunal's values as set out in its Strategy Statement 2024-2026, the Tribunal is committed to treating all parties who appear before it with respect, dignity and consideration. The Tribunal expects the same standards of behaviour from all parties appearing before it.

4. Quality and Consistency of Decision Making

4.1. Training at the Tribunal

The training of Tribunal Members is of central importance in the Tribunal and 2024 was no exception. As well as the usual internal training for Members, induction training was held for new Members, and details of all training sessions are set out below.

Training is delivered internally in the Tribunal and Members also have the opportunity to avail of external training provided by the European Union Agency for Asylum (the EUAA), the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The training provided by the EUAA is particularly relevant for Tribunal Members because it is training provided 'by judges for judges'.

A number of Tribunal Members are part of the EUAA Judicial Experts' Pool, which currently consists of 84 experts from 16 EU+ countries. With a truly transnational character, the pool further reflects the diversity of members of courts and tribunals working in the field of international protection, from all levels of the judiciary. The experts, with their deep-rooted knowledge of the Common European Asylum System and first-hand experience in adjudicating international protection cases, design and deliver judicial workshops in addition to contributing to ad hoc capacity building activities for their colleagues across Europe ³.

As well as formal training, informal training is provided in the Tribunal in the form of 'Lunch and Learn' sessions, and mentoring. At 'Lunch and Learn' sessions, Members share practical advice and tips with their colleagues and presentations are given on discrete topics.

New Tribunal Members benefitted significantly from mentoring they received from more experienced Members. The Tribunal is a collegiate body and the mentors shared insights on best practice in oral hearings and in writing decisions.

The Tribunal issues an internal journal, the Tribunal Quarterly, to all Members. The journal includes articles by Tribunal Members, updates on country information and a summary of case-law from the Irish Superior Courts, the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights, and relevant judgments from the courts of other Member States and the UK. There is an Editorial Committee comprised of one part-time Tribunal Member, one Assistant Principal Officer, one Administrative Officer, a Deputy Chairperson and two of the whole-time Members, one of whom is the overall editor.

Induction Training for New Members

Following a competition recruiting new part-time Tribunal Members, a total of 39 newly appointed Members attended their induction training which took place over four days. The training was led by Hugo Storey, retired Judge of the UK Upper Tribunal and training modules were also delivered by the Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson. One of the whole-time Members delivered a presentation on file preparation with the other whole-time Members taking part in a panel discussion.

³ https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-knowledge/courts-and-tribunals.

UNHCR participated in both Induction Training sessions.

Training delivered in 2024 included topics such as:

- Definition of a Refugee;
- Provisions of the International Protection Act 2015;
- Nationality / Statelessness;
- · Identification of material facts;
- · Assessment of credibility;
- The meaning of well-founded fear;
- Convention nexus (race, religion, nationality, political opinion, membership of a particular social group);
- Standard of proof;
- Persecution;
- Serious harm;
- Assessment of documents, COI, medical reports;
- State protection;
- Internal protection alternative;
- Exclusion;
- Judge-craft;
- File preparation;
- Dealing with applicants from safe countries of origin;
- Evaluation of evidence;
- Paperless files;
- Scheduling appeals;
- Paper-based appeals where the appellants are from safe countries of origin;
- Goal-setting and case-load management;
- Hearing room etiquette;
- Faster decision-making;
- Appeals pursuant to the European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018;
- Appeals pursuant to section 21 of the International Protection Act 2015;
- Appeals pursuant to section 22 of the International Protection Act 2015;
- LGBT based claims (provided by UNHCR);
- Credibility Analysis;
- Members' Resources;
- Soft skills for the hearing room.

4.2. Statutory Meeting of the Tribunal

The Tribunal held its annual Statutory Meeting on 8th November 2024. The Registrar of the Tribunal presented statistics and data from 2024, noting the increased output of the Tribunal. He also referred to the high rate of postponements of oral hearings, stating that this could not be sustained in 2025. The Chairperson discussed the work of the Tribunal over the year and set

out some information about the forthcoming EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The meeting further discussed forthcoming training for 2025 and the process for onboarding further new members during the course of 2025.

4.3. Quality Audit System

The Tribunal carries out a number of Quality Audits every year. This operation, which has been in place since 2017, is designed to provide a general overview of Tribunal decision-making and to identify systemic and individual training needs. The reviews are carried out on a quarterly basis by internal and external reviewers, including the UNHCR.

In order to carry out the reviews, a sample size of decisions are randomly chosen for review – the sample comprises roughly ten percent of the single procedure decisions issued by the Tribunal in the preceding quarter. All reviewers use a common set of criteria.

The objective criteria seek to evaluate the relevant decision in line with the Tribunal's own decision template, as well as in accordance with the legislative framework, jurisprudence from the Irish Superior Courts and the Court of Justice of the European Union. Consideration is also given to the provisions of the Chairperson's Guidelines.

At the conclusion of the review, findings are presented to Tribunal Members, training needs are met and consideration is given to any necessary changes required in the Tribunal's practice and procedures. The results are also shared with the external reviewers from the UNHCR.

4.4. Chairperson's Guidelines Issued in 2024

The Chairperson of the Tribunal may issue guidelines to Tribunal Members on the practical application and operation of the provisions or any particular provision of Part 10 of the International Protection Act 2015 and on developments in the law relating to international protection. Furthermore, the Chairperson may issue guidelines to the Registrar of the Tribunal for the purpose of the performance of the Registrar's functions. All Chairperson's Guidelines are intended to supplement the 2015 Act and Regulations and not to supplant them. In case of conflict, the provisions of the Act or relevant Regulation shall take precedence over the Guidelines and they should be read in conjunction with the duties set out in the Act and other legislation, guidelines, codes, policies or other rules applicable to the conduct of Members of the Tribunal.

In 2024, two Guidelines were issued:

Chairperson's Guideline No. 2024/1 – Guidance Note on Country Information

The purpose of this Guidance Note is to outline the relevant standards and principles governing the sourcing and assessing of country information for the determination of appeals under the Act and the 2018 Regulations.

The Tribunal is conscious of its obligation to ensure that its decisions are based on precise and up-to-date information obtained from various sources, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as to the general situation prevailing in the countries of origin of applicants for asylum and, where necessary, in countries through which they have transited. In recognition of relevant developments in the Common European Asylum System, in particular the establishment of the European Union Asylum Agency (hereinafter referred to as

'EUAA'), Tribunal Members make their decisions in consideration also of information obtained from the EUAA and relevant international human rights organisations.

In that regard, the Tribunal notes Article II of Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15th December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010, which mandates the EUAA to coordinate efforts among Member States to develop a common analysis on the situation in specific countries of origin and guidance notes to assist Member States in the assessment of relevant applications for international protection, taking note of the most recent UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from specific countries of origin. In accordance with Regulation 11(3), Member States are, in turn, required 'to take into account the common analysis and guidance notes when examining applications for international protection, without prejudice to their competence to decide on individual applications for international protection'.

Moreover, the Tribunal must determine the appeals before it on an individual basis, which includes taking into account all relevant facts as they relate to the country of origin at the time of taking a decision on the application, including laws and regulations of the country of origin and the manner in which they are applied. In order to fulfil its responsibility to ensure an effective remedy including a full and ex nunc examination of both facts and points of law, the Tribunal needs to take due account of possible changes in the situation in the country of origin that may affect the relevance of information relied upon by the International Protection Officer, as the determining authority, in the decision at first instance.

Chairperson's Guideline No. 2024/2 on Assigning and Re-Assigning Appeals to Members of the Tribunal by the Registrar

In assigning appeals to Members of the Tribunal, the overriding objective is to ensure that the business of the Tribunal is managed efficiently and that the business assigned to each Member is disposed of as expeditiously as may be consistent with fairness and natural justice. Subject to the matters set out in paragraph 2.1 and paragraphs 3 to 7 of the Guideline, the Registrar should endeavour, insofar as is practicable, to assign and re-assign appeals fairly and proportionately amongst the Members.

Moreover, the Guideline takes into account prioritisation requests received from the Minister for Justice pursuant to section 73(1)(b) of the International Protection Act 2015.

All Chairperson's Guidelines are available on the website of the Tribunal at: www.protectionappeals.ie

4.5. Judicial Review Monitoring

Following advices received from the Attorney General in 2016, it was recognised that the Tribunal as an independent statutory body carrying out quasi-judicial functions, should attract the same legal principles as those applying to a District Court judge, and that once the Tribunal has made a decision, it is functus officio and has no part in defending or supporting its decision in subsequent judicial review proceedings. The justification for a decision of the Tribunal is set out in the decision itself. Once a Member of the Tribunal has fulfilled the function of delivering a reasoned decision he or she has no further function, and it could be seen to impugn the independence of the Tribunal to seek to stand over its decisions, should they be challenged subsequently. These principles apply in the public interest to maintain confidence in the judicial and equivalent systems.

The only circumstances in which these principles may not apply is where mala fides on the part of a Member of the Tribunal is alleged, or systemic procedural challenges are made against the operations of the Tribunal. In all other cases, the principle that the party in whose interest an order has been made is the legitimus contradictor in judicial review proceedings challenging an order of a lower court or equivalent, does apply. In the circumstances of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal, the Minister is the party with an interest in the recommendation or decision and would therefore be the legitimus contradictor.

However, as a Respondent in judicial review challenges brought against any of its decisions, the Tribunal liaises with the Department of Justice Legal Services Support Unit (LSSU), the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) and the Attorney General's Office (AGO) in relation to the provision of relevant information and, in certain circumstances, observations. The Tribunal's Judicial Review Unit is situated within its administration / secretariat. It records and monitors progress of all judicial reviews, considers all legal documents received and co-ordinates responses with the Chairperson.

The Tribunal closely follows the developments in the Superior Courts in respect of judicial reviews of its decisions. Whether the Court upholds or quashes a decision of the Tribunal, the Tribunal seeks to implement in its guidance to and training of its Members, the jurisprudence of the Superior Courts. The particular ways in which the Tribunal does this include:

- 1. Clear summaries of the key insights from the jurisprudence, presented systematically in Quarterly Reviews for the benefit of Tribunal Members.
- 2. Implementation in Chairperson's Guidelines pursuant to s.63(2) in respect of developments of the law of international protection.
- 3. Revision and updating of the guidance and training materials used for the professional development of Tribunal Members.
- 4. Revision and updating of the decision-making templates available to Tribunal Members.
- 5. Determining and shaping the training provided to Tribunal Members internally.
- 6. Determining the external training relevant to Tribunal Members.
- 7. Hosting workshops, discussion groups and 'Lunch and Learn' sessions on matters arising from the case law.
- 8. Updates on particular net issues from case law and opinions of counsel.
- 9. Revision and updating of the quality audit materials used for analysing Tribunal Member decisions with a view to identifying matters for continued improvement.

During 2020, the Tribunal consolidated and ordered all information available to it in respect of litigation against the Tribunal since it came into being on the 31st of December 2016. This knowledge management project continued in 2024 and enables the Tribunal to systematically monitor relevant litigation in the Superior Courts for the purpose of further enhancing the quality and efficiency of its decision-making.

The average rate of total Tribunal decisions ⁴ that are challenged by judicial review remains below 7%, with the rate of judicial review taken against Tribunal decisions for 2024 being 6.7%. The rate of quashed Tribunal decisions in judicial reviews remains below 3%, while the rate of settlements by the end of 2024 was just over 2%.⁵

⁴ Since 2019

 $^{{}^{\}mathbf{5}}$ Based on decision and judicial review figures from the final week of 2024

A 'Summary of Judgments of the Irish Superior Courts in 2023 relating to decisions of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal', was published on the Tribunal's website for 2024 and can be accessed on our Publications page which is located here:

www.protectionappeals.ie/other-practices-and-procedures/

4.6. IARMJ European Chapter Biennial Conference



The Tribunal was pleased to facilitate the hosting of the **European Chapter of the International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges biennial conference**, which took place at Dublin Castle on 9th and 10th September 2024.

A welcome reception took place at the Law Society of Ireland on the evening of Sunday 8th September, with opening words from The Hon. Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell, Chief Justice of Ireland.

The conference took place at the Hibernia Conference Centre; the opening session was chaired by the Hon. Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell (Chief Justice of Ireland) and led by Mr Boštjan Zalar (Senior High Court Judge), Ms Helen McEntee TD (Minister for Justice of Ireland), Mr Rossa Fanning SC (Attorney General of Ireland), Ms Nina Gregori (Director of the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA)), Mr Jean-Nicolas Beuze (UNHCR Representative for EU Affairs, Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland and the Netherlands) and Ms Hilkka Becker (Chairperson of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal and President of the Council of the IARMJ Europe Chapter).

Following the opening session, the below sessions took place on day one (Monday 9th):

- Second Session: Developments in CJEU, ECtHR and Irish jurisprudence in the areas of asylum and migration
- Third Session: Challenges ahead of the mandate of the EUAA in relation to courts and tribunals in the EU
- Fourth Session: Examples of migration law issues before Supreme Courts of the Member States of the EU



The first day concluded with the General Assembly and Election of Officers of the IARMJ Europe Chapter.

The remaining conference sessions took place on day two (Tuesday 10th):

- Fifth Session: Selected issues of administration of quality justice in asylum and migration cases
- Sixth Session: Panel discussion on effective access to judicial protection regarding access to asylum, safe country concepts and/or border procedures
- Seventh Session: International Protection in Contemporary Situations of Armed Conflict

The conference papers are available on the website of the IARMJ.



II. Registrar's Executive Summary

I am pleased to present the Registrar's executive Summary for 2024.

The Tribunal had 3,908 appeals pending at the start of 2024. A further 8,835 appeals were lodged during the course of 2024. This is an 85% increase on the 4,775 appeals lodged with the Tribunal in 2023. The Tribunal completed 3,098 appeals in 2024 which is an increase of over 82% on the total completed appeals for 2023 which was 1,701. The number of appeals completed in 2024 was the highest annual completions by the Tribunal since it was set up in December 2016. The highest previous number of appeals received by the Tribunal since its establishment was 2,180 in 2019. At the end of 2024 there was a total of 9,705 appeals pending before the Tribunal which is the highest number of pending appeals at the end of a year.

The record high number of appeals received in 2024 is a result from an increase in applications for international protection made to the International Protection Office and recommendations being made by International Protection Officers.

In order to continue to address these significant demands on the Tribunal, we have been successful in securing further resources for the Tribunal to deliver more appeals in a timely and efficient manner. The staffing levels in the Tribunal administration were increased from 59 staff at the end of 2023 to 79 staff on the 31st December 2024. The decision-making capacity of the Tribunal has increased with the recruitment, training and onboarding of an additional 39 part-time Tribunal members in 2024, bringing the total number of part-time Tribunal Members to 89 at the end of the year.

I am pleased to report that following the pilot project with the first paperless digital appeals which commenced in November 2023, the Tribunal has completed the programme to now deal with all new appeals in a digital and paperless manner. Digital appeals will be key to maintaining the high standard of efficient and timely decisions for appellants. The Tribunal is committed to examining all processes to identify and implement further improvements to benefit service users. One of the initiatives to improve the experience of appellants attending the Tribunal for in-person hearings was a new informational short film available on the Tribunal's website to help those attending understand and prepare for their hearing.

The Tribunal will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders to maintain a high quality of decision making while continuing to make the case to increase capacity to produce more completed appeals.

Looking forward to 2025, the Tribunal anticipates receiving over 16,000 new appeals so it is vital that there is ongoing engagement with colleagues in the Department of Justice who work with the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform with a view to providing the required resources such as sufficient number of wholetime and part-time Tribunal Members, staffing, ICT infrastructure and appropriate accommodation for the Tribunal to carry out its duties in the future, in an efficient and timely manner as demands on its services are continuing to increase.

The Tribunal will continue to work with colleagues in the Department of Justice advising inter alia on potential changes to processes and structures regarding appeals on decisions made on international protection in the context of Ireland's opt-in to the EU Migration and Asylum Pact. The Tribunal will also continue to strive to deliver an appeals service that reflects the Tribunal's values of fairness, efficiency, respect and transparency.

I would like to sincerely thank the Chairperson and both Deputy Chairpersons for their collaboration throughout the year.

Further thanks go to Geraldine Kennedy, Deirdre O'Reilly and Ciara Carroll who manage the Operations, Corporate/Secretarial and Data Protection/Business Process Improvement Functions respectively, all the Tribunal staff including our Service Officers as well as all our Tribunal Members for their support and commitment. I also wish to thank our colleagues in the Department of Justice for their continued support and assistance and in particular the Civil Governance Unit, the Human Resources Unit and our colleagues who assist the Tribunal in the delivery of ICT services.



George Jewici

George Sinclair Registrar

5. Registrar and Administration of the Tribunal

The Tribunal Registrar is tasked to manage and control the staff and administration of the Tribunal, and to perform such other functions as may be conferred on him by the Chairperson under the 2015 Act. Pursuant to s.66(3) of the 2015 Act, the Registrar shall be responsible to the Chairperson for the performance of his functions.

The Registrar also has responsibility for assigning the appeals to be determined to Members of the Tribunal, having regard to the need to ensure the efficient management of the work of, and the expeditious performance of its functions by the Tribunal, consistent with fairness and natural justice, and to any Guidelines issued by the Chairperson.

Administrative staff of the Tribunal are civil servants and currently assigned to the Tribunal from the Department of Justice in accordance with s.61(4) of the 2015 Act. The agreed administrative staffing complement for the Tribunal forms part of the Department's Oversight Agreement with the Tribunal and, for the reporting period, was 80. Additionally, the Tribunal Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons and whole-time Tribunal Members are on contracts of service with the Department for their respective periods of appointment.

IPAT STAFF LEVELS 31/12/2024	Persons	FTE			
Chair, Deputies & WTM	Chair, Deputies & WTM				
Chairperson (PO Equivalent)	1	1			
Deputy Chairperson (APO Equivalent)	2	2			
W/T Tribunal Member (APO Equivalent)	3	3			
SUB TOTAL	6	6			
IPAT Admin Staff					
Principal Officer (Registrar)	1	1			
Assistant Principal Officer	3	3			
HEO/Administrative Officers	5	4.6			
Executive Officers	17	16.6			
Legal Interns (EO EQUIV)	2	2			
Clerical Officers	51	50.4			
SUB TOTAL	79	77.6			
TOTAL (All Admin + Chair Team)	85	83.6			

5.1. Tribunal Staff Levels as of 31/12/24

5.2. Tribunal Staff Development and Training

Onboarding of operational staff continued throughout 2024 with a substantial amount of peer to peer and on the job learning taking place. Maintaining continual professional development and building on best practice courses provided by One Learning and the Department of Justice on an array of areas, were promoted and availed of. Again this year, staff continued and commenced further education courses partly funded the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR).

Staff were invited to attended training and information sessions provided to Tribunal Members to further their understanding of the work of the Tribunal and the decision making process. 'Lunch and Learns' on a variety of issues were hosted and a 'sit with the Chair' session was very informative for all operational teams.

5.3. Modernisation Update

A key priority in the Tribunal's strategy is the digital transformation of its business processes. With the volume of appeals increasing substantially each year, modernising systems and workflows is essential to meeting operational targets efficiently.

In 2024, the Tribunal conducted a comprehensive review of its current processes. The findings from this review informed the business case for the Tribunal's Digital Transformation Programme, aimed at enabling a more efficient, end-to-end appeals processing system. The business case is currently under consideration.

The Tribunal introduced paperless appeal files in 2024 following a successful pilot in late 2023. All new Tribunal Members are now assigned paperless files only. All Tribunal Members have received paperless file training and feedback to the transition has been very positive. The use of Microsoft PowerApps has assisted in the management of digital files.

The Tribunal continues to use the eDocs cloud based system, launched in 2023, for electronic file storage. The performance of this system remains under review, as the volume of appeals increases. The use of editable PDFs for submitting appeal forms is also under ongoing review to identify and implement the most user-friendly and efficient system for appellants and legal representatives.

6. Financial Report

Category	Expenditure in 2024
IT Costs	€404,013.71
Legal fees	€10,332.00
Marketing/Promotional Expenses	€6,328.35
Members Fees	€1,417,107.88
Membership of Professional Bodies	€4,487.00
Office and Premises Expenses	€120,520.36
Office Machinery and Other Office Supplies	€53,227.71
Postal and Communications Services	€27,864.61
Salaries and Wages	€3,511,295.96
Training and Development	€97,009.99
Translation/Interpretation	€162,725.97
Travel	€2,319.79
Gross Total	€5,817,233.33
Pension Levy	-€38,864.28
Net Total	€5,778,369.05

6.1. Decisions issued by whole-time and part-time Members of the Tribunal in 2024

Member of Tribunal	Latest Date Appointed	Number of Decisions Issued
1. John Buckley, B.L. (W/T)	03/09/2021	124
2. Agnes McKenzie, B.L. (W/T)	04/09/2021	127
3. Emma Toal, B.L. (W/T)	24/04/2023	108
4. Ciara Bannerman, B.L.	07/06/2023	14
5. Emma Barry, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
6. Niall Beirne, S.C.	07/06/2023	0
7. James Benson, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
8. Stephen Boggs, B.L	07/06/2023	14
9. Kirk Boylan, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
10. Maeve Boyle, B.L.	07/06/2023	3

6.1. Decisions issued by whole-time and part-time Members of the Tribunal in 2024 (continued)

Member of Tribunal	Latest Date Appointed	Number of Decisions Issued
11. Alan Brady, B.L.	07/06/2023	9
12. Simon Brady, B.L.	14/09/2020	7
13. Keith Branagan, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
14. Brid Breathnach, Solicitor	27/08/2024	1
15. James Bridgeman, S.C.	27/08/2024	0
16. Fiona Browne, Solicitor	27/08/2024	0
17. Margaret Browne, B.L.	07/06/2023	120
18. Alison de Bruir, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
19. Eoin Byrne, B.L.	07/06/2023	53
20. Mark Byrne, B.L.	07/06/2023	99
21. Allen Cansick, B.L.	07/06/2023	2
22. Kathy Casey, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
23. William Cleary, B.L.	27/08/2024	5
24. Catherine Cosgrave, Solicitor	27/08/2024	0
25. Peter Cronin-Burbridge, B.L.	07/06/2023	21
26. Siobhan Cullen, Solicitor	07/06/2023	18
27. Brian Cusack, B.L.	07/06/2023	53
28. Arthur Cush, B.L.	07/06/2023	27
29. James Daly, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
30. Sharon Dillon-Lyons, B.L.	07/06/2023	34
31. Steven Dixon, B.L.	07/06/2023	20
32. Leonora Doyle, Solicitor	07/06/2023	63
33. Mary Durkan, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
34. Robert Eagar, former Judge of the High Court of Ireland ⁶	27/08/2024	0
35. Miranda Egan-Langley, B.L.	07/06/2023	55
36. Mary Forde, Solicitor	07/06/2023	41
37. Úna Glazier-Farmer, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
38. Paul Gormley, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
39. Denis Halton, B.L.	07/12/2020	0

⁶ In memoriam. It was a great shock to everyone at the Tribunal to learn of the untimely passing of our colleague Robert Eagar, former Judge of the High Court of Ireland, in November 2024. His appointment to the Tribunal was most welcome and we felt privileged to have been joined by a lawyer of such exceptional calibre. Our thoughts continue to be with Justice Eagar's wife Monica, their daughters Katie and Sara and their extended family.

6.1. Decisions issued by whole-time and part-time Members of the Tribunal in 2024 (continued)

Member of Tribunal	Latest Date Appointed	Number of Decisions Issued
40. Grace Hogan, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
41. Matthew Holmes, B.L.	07/06/2023	40
42. Christopher Hughes, B.L.	07/06/2023	12
43. Maura Hutchinson, Solicitor	07/06/2023	0
44. Ciaran Joyce, B.L.	07/06/2023	44
45. Sarah Kearney, B.L.	07/06/2023	62
46. Jacqueline Kelly, B.L.	07/06/2023	3
47. Paul Kerrigan, Solicitor	27/08/2024	79
48. Michael Kinsley, B.L.	07/06/2023	16
49. Folasade Bola Kuti-Olaniyi, Solicitor	07/06/2023	4
50. Lorraine Lally, B.L.	07/06/2023	0
51. Evelyn Larney, Solicitor	07/06/2023	2
52. Alex Layden, B.L.	07/06/2023	55
53. Kevin Lenahan, B.L.	07/12/2020	0
54. Evelyn Leyden, Solicitor	07/06/2023	5
55. Robert Lowe, B.L.	07/06/2023	276
56. Theresa Lowe, B.L.	27/08/2024	2
57. Dermot Manning, B.L.	07/06/2023	41
58. Danny Mason, B.L.	27/08/2024	2
59. Ciaran McCarthy, B.L.	07/06/2023	40
60. Claire McCarthy, Solicitor	27/08/2024	4
61. John McDaid, Solicitor	27/08/2024	1
62. Anne McElligott, B.L.	27/08/2024	11
63. Robert McGarr, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
64. Michael McGrath, S.C.	07/06/2023	118
65. Seán Michael McHale, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
66. Fiona McMorrow, B.L.	27/08/2024	6
67. Stuart McTaggart, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
68. Frances Meenan, S.C.	27/08/2024	0
69. Elizabeth Mitrow, B.L.	27/08/2024	48
70. Aisling Mulligan, B.L.	07/06/2023	7
71. Helen Murray, B.L.	07/06/2023	16

6.1. Decisions issued by whole-time and part-time Members of the Tribunal in 2024 (continued)

Member of Tribunal	Latest Date Appointed	Number of Decisions Issued
72. Úna Ní Chatháin, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
73. John Noonan, B.L.	07/06/2023	393
74. Cormac Ó Dúlacháin, S.C.	07/06/2023	61
75. Martin O'Brien, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
76. Zeldine O'Brien, B.L.	07/06/2023	36
77. Claire O'Connor, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
78. Eoin O'Connor, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
79. James O'Connor, B.L.	27/08/2024	8
80. Gerard O'Donovan, B.L.	12/12/2020	2
81. Bríd O'Flaherty, B.L.	07/06/2023	11
82. Fidelma O'Hagan, Solicitor	27/08/2024	0
83. Patricia O'Sullivan Lacy, B.L	07/06/2023	2
84. Noel Phoenix, Solicitor	27/08/2024	0
85. Lalita Pillay, B.L.	07/12/2020	0
86. Brenda Power, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
87. Michelle Pratley, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
88. Andrew Robinson, B.L.	27/08/2024	39
89. Nicholas Russell, B.L.	07/06/2023	133
90. Andrew Sexton, S.C.	07/06/2023	45
91. Shereen Shafaatulla, Solicitor	27/08/2024	13
92. Áine Shannon, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
93. Moira Shipsey, Solicitor	07/06/2023	46
94. Mairead Smith, B.L.	07/06/2023	46
95. Elizabeth Spelman, Solicitor	27/08/2024	0
96. John Stanley, B.L.	27/08/2024	14
97. Kenneth Togher, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
98. Michael Tuite, S.C.	27/08/2024	0
99. Majella Twomey, B.L.	07/06/2023	56
100. Ciaran White, B.L.	07/06/2023	25
101. Joanne Williams, B.L.	07/06/2023	38
102. Ian Woodland, B.L.	27/08/2024	0
Grand Total	-	2880

7. Statistics

7.1. Summary – Tribunal Caseload 2024

2024	
Appeals Received	8835
Cases Scheduled	2833
Decisions Issued	2887
Total Appeals Completed	3098
Live Appeals on Hand at Year End	9705

7.2. Summary – Types of Appeals received in 2024

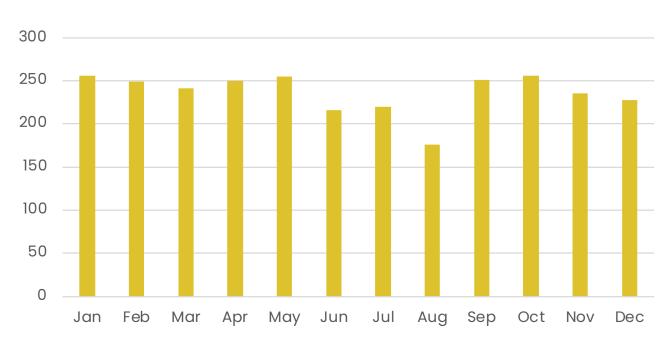
Appeal Type	Appeals Received
All International Protections Appeals	8032
Inadmissible Appeals	349
Subsequent Appeals	161
Dublin III Regulation Appeals	272
Reception Conditions	21
Grand Total	8835

7.3. All Appeals Received in 2024

	All Appeals Received in 2024						
Month	All International Protections Appeals	Dublin III	Inadmissibility Appeals	Subsequent Appeals	Reception	Grand	
Month	Accelerated IP Appeal	Substantive IP Appeal	Regulation Appeals	Received (s.21)	Received (s.22)	Conditions Appeals	Total
Jan	158	227	17	17	0	2	421
Feb	281	352	14	26	2	1	676
Mar	222	264	9	53	1	0	549
Apr	240	232	18	69	6	1	566
Мау	261	245	33	53	6	3	601
Jun	257	298	10	26	7	2	600
Jul	218	500	3	23	11	4	759
Aug	227	578	25	19	18	0	867
Sep	122	565	46	12	13	1	759
Oct	151	726	36	15	28	0	956
Nov	152	780	40	19	41	5	1037
Dec	118	858	21	17	28	2	1044
Grand Total	80	32	272	349	161	21	8835

7.4. Number of Hearings Scheduled in 2024

Month Issued in 2024	Number of Decisions Issued
January	256
February	249
March	241
April	250
Мау	255
June	216
July	220
August	176
September	251
October	256
November	235
December	228
Grand Total	2833



Hearings Scheduled By Month in 2024

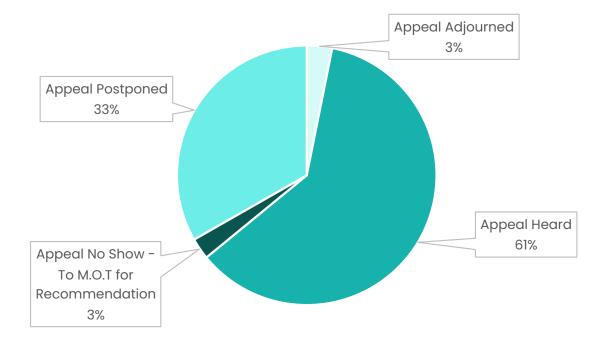
7.5. 'No Shows' and Withdrawals/Deemed Withdrawals 2024

2024	Number of Appeals
No Shows	64
Appeals Withdrawn/Deemed Withdrawn	211

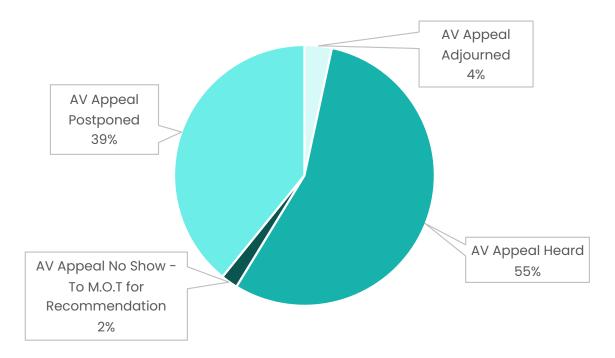
7.6. Number of Postponements and Adjournments

2024	Number of Appeals
Appeal Adjourned	26
Appeal Postponed	274
AV Appeal Adjourned	68
AV Appeal Postponed	787
Grand Total	1155

Outcome For On Site Scheduled Cases for 2024



Outcome For On AV Scheduled Cases for 2024



7.7. Total Number of Decisions Issued Per Month

Month Issued in 2024	Number of Decisions Issued
January	172
February	236
March	214
April	277
Мау	267
June	178
July	311
August	226
September	196
October	301
November	332
December	177
Grand Total	2887

7.8. All Decisions Issued 2024

	All Appeals Decided in 2024									
Manth		Dublin III	Inadmissibility		Reception	Grand				
Month	Accelerated IP Appeal	Substantive IP Appeal	Regulation Appeals		(s.22)	Appeals Conditions (s.22) Appeals				
Jan	74	81	8	8	1	0	172			
Feb	113	104	8	8	0	3	236			
Mar	102	99	5	7	1	0	214			
Apr	138	125	7	7	0	0	277			
Мау	157	98	4	7	0	1	267			
Jun	91	78	2	4	0	3	178			
Jul	190	102	2	12	2	3	311			
Aug	100	115	1	7	0	3	226			
Sep	98	83	1	14	0	0	196			
Oct	165	123	3	10	0	0	301			
Nov	190	117	7	13	3	2	332			
Dec	90	72	4	9	0	2	177			
Grand Total	1508	1197	52	106	7	17	2887			

7.9. Summary of Pending Appeals on 31st December 2024

Appeal Type	Number Pending
All International Protections appeals	8831*
Inadmissible Appeals	381
Dublin III Regulation Appeals	330
Subsequent Appeals	161
Reception Condition Appeals	2
Grand Total	9705

* Substantive IP Appeals 6250 and Accelerated IP Appeal 2581

7.10. Length of Appeal Process

Median Processing Times in Months

(for decisions issued in 2024 from 'Appeal Accepted' date to 'Appeal Decision' date)

Appeal Type	Median	Number of Appeals
Substantive IP Appeals	10	1197
Accelerated IP Appeals	10	1508
Subsequent Appeals	6	7
Inadmissible Appeals	10	106
Dublin III Regulation Appeals	10	52
Total	10	2870

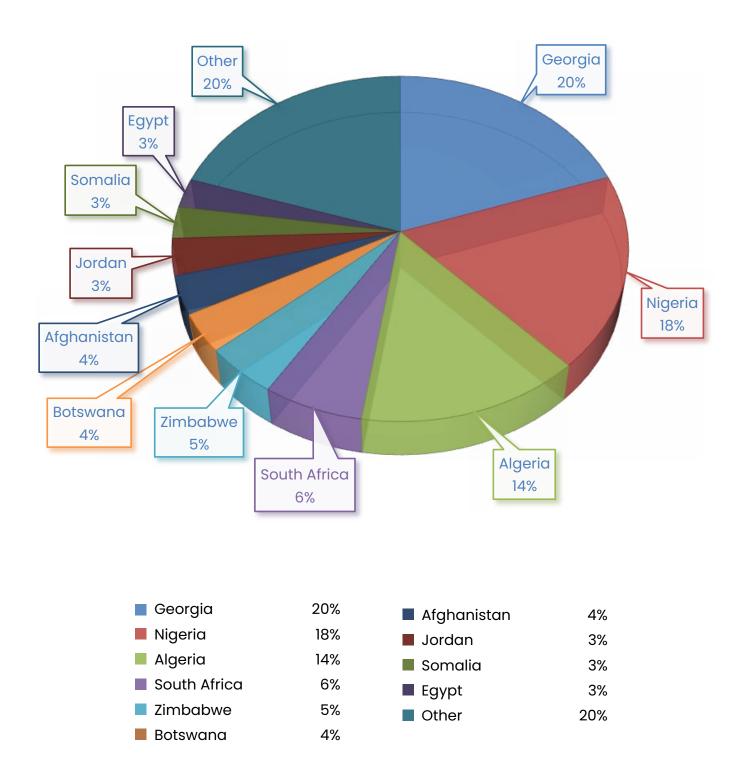
Median Processing Times in Months

(for Appeals Lodged and decided in 2024 from 'Appeal Accepted' date to 'Appeal Decision' date)

Appeal Type	Median	Number of Appeals
Substantive IP Appeals	5	100
Accelerated IP Appeals	7	152
Subsequent Appeals	3	4
Inadmissible Appeals	7	21
Dublin III Regulation Appeals	0	0
Total	6	277

7.11. Substantive International Protection Appeals Accepted in 2024 by Country of Origin

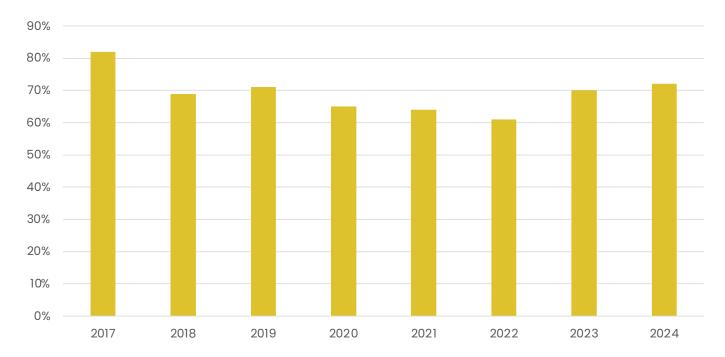
Accepted Appeals Received by Country of Origin



7.12. International Protection Single Procedure Appeals 2024 (Outcome of Appeals)

International Protection Appeals 2024							
Granted/Set Aside – Asylum Protection (SP) Granted/Set Total Affirmed Total Decisions							
676	80	1949	2705				
25% 3% 72% 100%							

7.13. Analysis of Single Procedure IP Recommendations Affirmed 2017 to 2024



Analysis of IP Single Procedure Affirmed Decisions

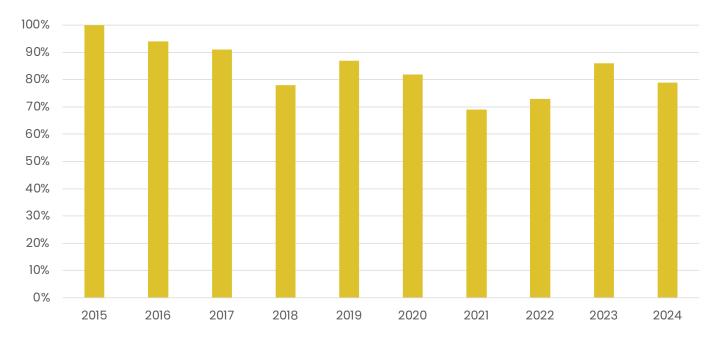
7.14. Summary of International Protection Appeals Decisions by Country Of Nationality – Affirmed and Set Aside in 2024

Nationality	Grand Total	Granted/Set Aside	Refused/ Affirmed	Set Aside % of Total Decisions	Affirmed % of Total Decisions
Georgia	1130	178	952	16%	84%
South Africa	271	80	191	30%	70%
Nigeria	263	104	159	40%	60%
Zimbabwe	218	127	91	58%	42%
Algeria	217	13	204	6%	94%
Albania	103	16	87	16%	84%
Botswana	84	39	45	46%	54%
Somalia	66	48	18	73%	27%
DR Congo	36	22	14	61%	39%
Egypt	34	3	31	9%	91%
Other	283	126	157	45%	55%
Grand Total	2705	756	1949	28%	72%

7.15. Dublin III Regulation Decisions Affirmed and Set Aside in 2024

	Affirmed		Set Aside		Total	
Appeal Type	Number of Decisions	%	Number of Decisions	%	Number of Decisions	%
Dublin III	41	79%	11	21%	52	100%

7.16. Analysis of Dublin Regulation Decisions 2015 to 2024



Analysis of Dublin Regulation Affirmed Decisions

7.17. Inadmissibility Decisions Affirmed (s.21)

	Affirmed S		Set Aside		Total	
Appeal Type	Number of Decisions	%	Number of Decisions	%	Number of Decisions	%
Inadmissible Appeal	57	54%	49	46%	106	100%

7.18. Subsequent Application Decisions Affirmed (s.22)

	Affirmed		Set Aside		Total	
Appeal Type	Number of Decisions	%	Number of Decisions	%	Number of Decisions	%
Subsequent Appeal	4	57%	3	43%	7	100%

The International Protection Appeals Tribunal

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