

# EUROPE



Volunteers from local aid agency “Salam” distribute food to Afghan asylum-seekers camped in sand dunes near Dunkirk on the north coast of France.



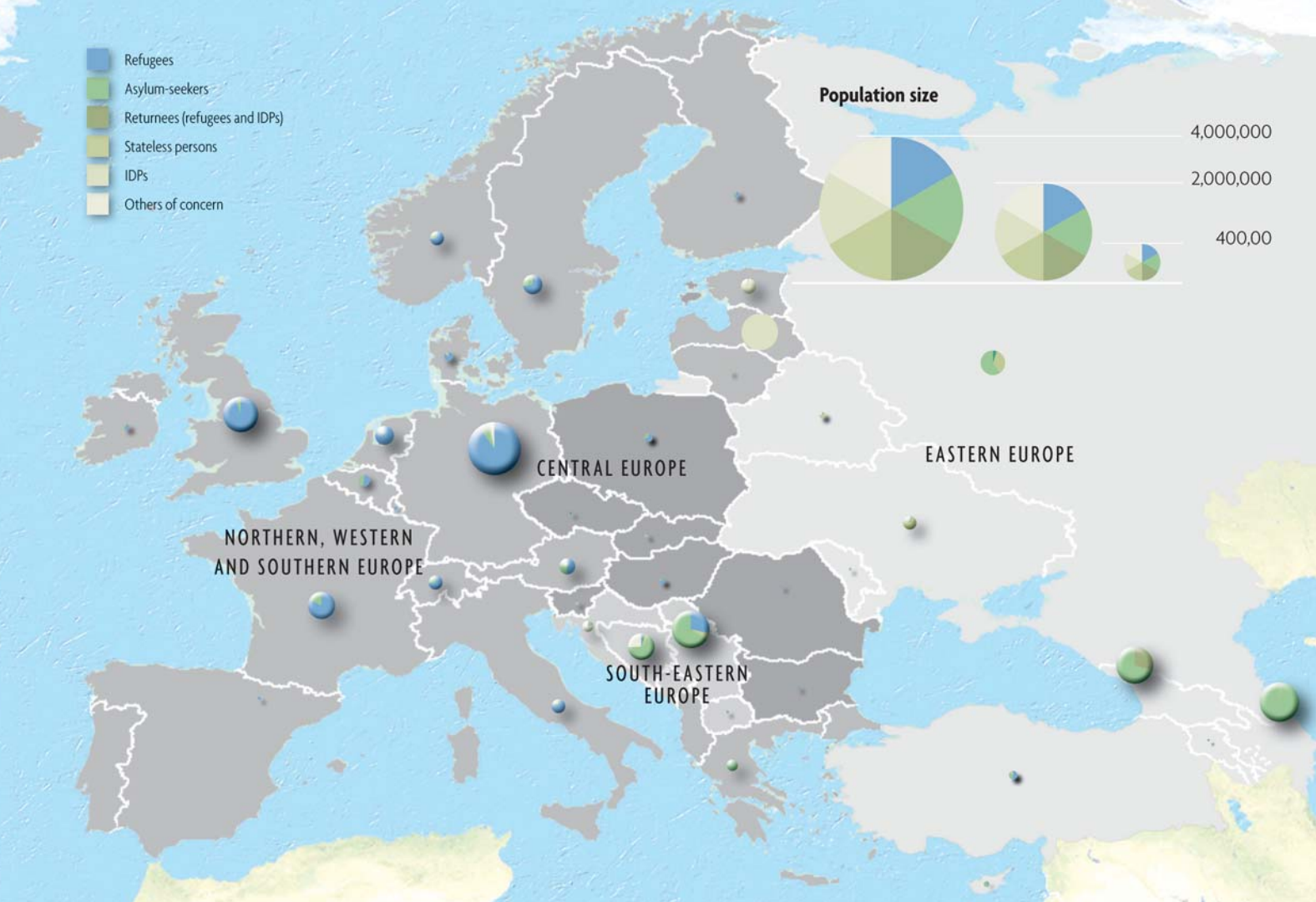
## | Working environment |

UNHCR's European region of operations includes 48 countries and three regional organizations: the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). All countries in the region are States Parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention, with Turkey and Monaco maintaining geographic reservations.

The operational context in Europe encompasses the full range of issues and of people of concern to UNHCR. Many countries in the region have sophisticated asylum systems, while those of others are still evolving. UNHCR faces challenges associated with mixed migration, internal displacement and protracted refugee problems. It also copes with frozen conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as situations of statelessness. Public and private sources in Europe provide more than 40 per cent of UNHCR's funding.

In the first half of 2009 roughly 140,000 new asylum applications were lodged in European countries, approximately the same number as in the corresponding period in 2008. More than 80 per cent were presented in member countries of the EU, and most of the rest in Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

Access to territory and to refugee status determination procedures, the quality of asylum decisions and integration prospects remain key issues of concern. UNHCR works closely with the European Union to promote the development of a Common European Asylum System.



South-Eastern Europe hosts a large displaced population—the legacy of conflicts in the 1990s. Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina host the largest numbers of displaced people. Many refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are still living in difficult conditions, unable or unwilling to return to their homes, and resolution of this protracted situation is high on UNHCR’s agenda

In Eastern Europe, the number of IDPs exceeds the number of asylum-seekers and refugees, with one million internally displaced in Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Russian Federation alone. Where UNHCR has been invited by the authorities to address the protection and assistance needs of IDPs, it does so in accordance with the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

The number of recognized refugees in Eastern Europe is quite low, yet their integration remains a challenge. Scarce prospects for employment, compounded by housing shortages and hostility toward foreigners, regardless of legal status, pose particular difficulties.

### Strategic objectives

In 2010, UNHCR will continue to work with regional organizations, governments and civil society toward three overarching objectives: (i) to ensure respect for principles of international protection; (ii) to strengthen assistance and find durable solutions for refugees, IDPs and stateless people; and (iii) to mobilize political, public and financial support for UNHCR and the people it serves.

#### Ensuring respect for the principles of international protection

Priorities in this context include ensuring access to territory and asylum procedures for people seeking international protection, regardless of their travel route or means, and improving the quality of asylum procedures and decision-making.

As States intensify efforts to prevent irregular migration, it is important to ensure access to territory and to asylum procedures for persons seeking protection.

UNHCR will advocate for the incorporation of protection safeguards in migration control measures, and work to prevent *refoulement*, in particular in the context of interception at sea. It will pursue its engagement in building protection capacities, especially in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

In Turkey, UNHCR will continue to advocate for access to the territory and to asylum procedures; increase border monitoring activities; conduct training on international protection; and strengthen partnerships with the authorities and with civil society.

Improving the quality of asylum decision-making will remain a priority. In the EU, the underlying assumption of the Common European Asylum System is that a person in need of protection can find protection no matter where in the European Union the application is made. However, this is not yet the case. The Office will therefore pursue efforts to ensure the quality and consistency of asylum procedures, including by providing information relating to situations in countries of origin of asylum-seekers and through specific projects, of which some will be supported by the European Refugee Fund. UNHCR also looks forward to playing a role in the planned European Asylum Support Office.

High courts in EU Member States are already turning to the European Court of Justice for guidance on the interpretation of EU asylum law, and are expected to do so increasingly in future. UNHCR will continue to issue statements on refugee law to contribute to the harmonized interpretation of EU legal standards, in line with international norms. UNHCR will also submit third-party interventions to the European Court of Human Rights as appropriate.

UNHCR will support countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe to build fair and effective asylum systems. The development of protection mechanisms in Turkey, a critical transit point for refugees and asylum-seekers is particularly important.

### ○ *Strengthening assistance and durable solutions for persons of concern*

UNHCR will implement assistance programmes in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, to the benefit of asylum-seekers and refugees, IDPs and stateless people. It will seek durable solutions through the elimination of obstacles to local integration; the promotion of naturalization; and support for voluntary return. Resettlement will be pursued for the most vulnerable refugees for whom other solutions are not available.

UNHCR will redouble its efforts to bring to a close the long-standing situation of displacement in South-Eastern Europe by mobilizing support for local integration and voluntary return. In addition, it will seek to address problems of *de jure* and *de facto* statelessness and the vulnerability of refugees, returnees and IDPs from minority groups.

While UNHCR's overarching objective is to support fair and efficient national asylum procedures across Europe, in Turkey, which maintains a geographic reservation to the 1951 Convention, UNHCR will continue to assess applications for refugee status from non-Europeans and to seek resettlement places for those recognized as refugees. Unfortunately, resettlement has not kept pace with the needs, and by mid-2009 more than 11,000 refugees in Turkey were awaiting resettlement.

UNHCR will pursue efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness across Europe, with particular attention to situations in South-Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the Russian Federation. It will promote accessions to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on statelessness, and boost legal assistance to stateless individuals, or those at risk of statelessness, to help them to secure identity documents and enjoy their rights.

In the EU as well as in Norway and Switzerland, UNHCR will continue to support measures to strengthen the integration of newcomers, including protection beneficiaries, and will promote greater engagement in refugee resettlement. Encouraged by the recent proposal for a joint EU Resettlement Scheme, UNHCR will work with the European Commission and Member States to expand resettlement opportunities.

## Financial information

The budget for Europe declined steadily from 2002 to 2007, when it dropped to USD 111 million. The comprehensive budget in 2010—USD 254 million—brings the level close to that of a decade ago. Almost half of this budget is devoted to refugee situations, over 40 per cent to reintegration and the remainder divided between situations of internal displacement and statelessness. The budget increase reflects UNHCR's strengthened role in Eastern Europe and the Office's plan to launch an energetic effort to bring the long displacement chapter in South-Eastern Europe to a close.

In 2010–2011, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), with the backing of 10 EU Member States and the support from the European Refugee Fund, will implement a project to promote best practices in resettlement, from selection to reception and integration, as well as the use of the Emergency Transit Centre in Romania. UNHCR will also support intra-EU responsibility-sharing measures.

### ○ Mobilizing support

UNHCR will continue to cooperate with partners at national, regional and global levels, including EU institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, IOM, ICMPD and the ICRC as well as national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, and national NGOs.

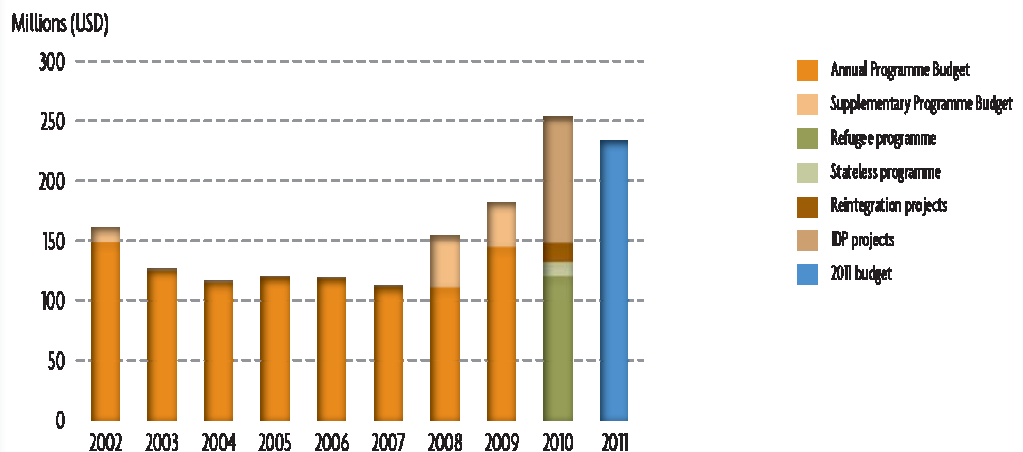
Many of UNHCR's largest donors are in this region, and governments and institutions provide strong political backing for the organization's global objectives. UNHCR offices in Europe will engage actively in ensuring understanding for refugee issues and in mobilizing resources from governmental, intergovernmental and private sources for UNHCR's operations worldwide.

## | Challenges |

Maintaining fair and efficient asylum systems is not easy in a context where the public debate is often centred on questions of security and control of irregular migration, and influenced by negative attitudes towards foreigners. The global economic crisis also complicates States' efforts to implement asylum, integration and resettlement systems which reflect best practices. Continuing challenges include ongoing work toward a Common European Asylum System; the development of appropriate responses to mixed migration; and the need to put an end to long-standing displacement in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

UNHCR's decentralization and regionalization efforts in Europe will be consolidated in 2010. In mid-2009, UNHCR restructured and relocated the Office of the Director of the Bureau for Europe. The director and staff responsible for Northern, Western, Southern and Central Europe, including the EU institutions, and for resource mobilization from the European Commission, are based in Brussels. The deputy director and staff dealing with Eastern and South-Eastern Europe remain in Geneva. ■

## UNHCR's budget in Europe 2002 - 2011



## UNHCR'S BUDGET IN EUROPE (USD)

Operation	Revised budget <sup>1</sup>	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	Total	
		Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects		
	2009	2010					2011
<b>EASTERN EUROPE</b>							
Armenia	1,942,188	2,470,244	0	1,352,569	0	3,822,813	3,822,800
Azerbaijan	3,812,083	4,458,130	327,922	0	1,451,489	6,237,541	8,954,200
Belarus	1,737,659	0	0	0	0	0	0
Georgia	62,448,546	5,577,707	1,463,365	0	55,018,653	62,059,725	29,863,600
Rep. of Moldova	1,428,092	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian Federation	13,635,690	8,415,288	960,988	3,120,076	12,503,647	25,000,000	28,116,700
Turkey	8,747,210	15,945,156	66,438	86,766	19,104	16,117,464	23,349,600
Ukraine Regional Office <sup>2</sup>	4,200,012	10,960,861	587,205	0	0	11,548,066	13,100,000
Regional activities	861,263	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	98,812,743	47,827,387	3,405,918	4,559,411	68,992,893	124,785,609	107,206,900
<b>SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE</b>							
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6,418,164	4,360,322	988,789	0	13,934,133	19,283,244	21,054,100
Croatia	4,034,104	5,944,377	550,264	0	0	6,494,640	7,000,000
Serbia	30,410,136	15,410,687	2,576,789	11,148,423	24,043,258	53,179,157	48,094,600
Montenegro	2,524,560	5,543,061	416,512	0	0	5,959,572	5,954,500
The FYR of Macedonia	3,007,236	3,655,146	595,515	0	0	4,250,661	3,701,200
Subtotal	46,394,200	34,913,592	5,127,869	11,148,423	37,977,391	89,167,275	85,804,400
<b>CENTRAL EUROPE</b>							
Bulgaria	818,628	0	0	0	0	0	0
Czech Republic	455,914	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hungary Regional Office <sup>3</sup>	2,967,785	8,938,441	749,329	0	0	9,687,769	9,936,100
Poland	819,522	0	0	0	0	0	0
Romania	1,029,099	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slovakia	732,678	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slovenia	170,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regional activities	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	7,093,626	8,938,441	749,329	0	0	9,687,769	9,936,100
<b>NORTHERN, WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE</b>							
Albania	674,041	0	0	0	0	0	0
Austria	1,064,436	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belgium Regional Office <sup>4</sup>	7,371,612	4,236,924	455,882	0	0	4,692,806	4,641,700
Cyprus	889,908	0	0	0	0	0	0
France	2,759,641	2,765,974	104,214	0	0	2,870,188	2,893,800
Germany <sup>5</sup>	2,247,683	3,528,899	503,781	0	0	4,032,680	3,756,900
Greece	1,251,103	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ireland	753,925	579,115	34,834	0	0	613,949	619,900
Italy Regional Office <sup>6</sup>	5,240,271	12,466,941	183,397	0	0	12,650,338	10,958,000
Malta	282,128	0	0	0	0	0	0
Portugal	85,653	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spain	1,675,940	1,346,208	170,342	0	0	1,516,550	1,800,500
Sweden Regional Office <sup>7</sup>	1,931,979	1,772,807	459,570	0	0	2,232,378	4,023,700
Switzerland	739,677	0	0	0	0	0	0
United Kingdom	1,757,102	1,436,769	197,586	0	0	1,634,355	1,285,400
Subtotal	28,725,099	28,133,637	2,109,606	0	0	30,243,243	29,979,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>181,025,668</b>	<b>119,813,057</b>	<b>11,392,722</b>	<b>15,707,834</b>	<b>106,970,284</b>	<b>253,883,896</b>	<b>232,927,300</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes supplementary programme requirements of USD 37,308,080.

<sup>2</sup> Ukraine Regional Office includes activities in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova as of 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Hungary Regional Office includes activities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia as of 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Belgium Regional Office includes activities in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the Liaison office in Switzerland as of 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Germany includes activities in Austria as of 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Italy Regional Office includes activities in Albania, Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Portugal as of 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Sweden Regional Office includes activities in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway as of 2010.