

Central Europe



Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Hungary
Poland
Romania
Slovakia
Slovenia



A Sudanese refugee rests at a homeless shelter in Budapest.

| Working environment |

The number and profile of people of concern to UNHCR in the subregion has remained largely unchanged in 2010, as compared with 2009. There were some 6,250 asylum applications in the first half of 2010, while 220 people were granted refugee status and 340 people received complementary forms of protection. The projection for all of 2010 shows a decrease in both asylum applications and in the number of those receiving protection.

The economic situation in the subregion has worsened significantly due to the global downturn, resulting in shrinking gross domestic production and rising unemployment rates. As a consequence, the attitude towards foreigners in general, and migrants and people of concern to UNHCR in particular, has been adversely affected. Furthermore, governments in the subregion often prioritize economic and financial issues at the expense of asylum and migration policy.

Most countries in the subregion have a good record with regard to the treatment of people of concern to UNHCR. However, minority groups, in particular Roma communities, tend to face discrimination and be targeted by racist and xenophobic groups. In addition, the detention of asylum-seekers, sometimes in sub-standard conditions, is on the increase.



Strategy in 2011

UNHCR's strategy will focus on the following objectives: i) improving access to territory and asylum procedures; ii) ensuring dignified reception conditions; iii) ensuring fair and efficient asylum procedures; iv) promoting the integration and resettlement of refugees; and v) ensuring national legal frameworks to deal with stateless people are developed or strengthened.

Attaining these goals will hinge on the capacity of States in the subregion to assume primary responsibility in providing protection and assistance to those of concern to UNHCR, and their will to allocate sufficient resources to do so. The Office will therefore engage in advocacy and capacity-building activities with governmental counterparts, and with civil society.

UNHCR will help governments to provide fair and efficient asylum procedures, notably by means of the project "Further Developing Quality of Asylum Systems" under the European Refugee Fund. The Office will focus on advocating for durable solutions for refugees—especially local integration and resettlement. Another priority will be to monitor reception conditions, and cooperate with governments and civil society partners on monitoring borders.

UNHCR will continue to assist Romania and Slovakia in fulfilling their commitments to admit refugees in transit to a resettlement country. It will co-finance the management of the Emergency Transit Centres (ETCs) in these countries and provide expert advice. In Romania and Bulgaria, UNHCR will support the efforts being made by these new EU Member States to upgrade their asylum and refugee protection regimes with a view to compliance with European standards. UNHCR will also

lobby for the introduction of legislation on the rights and obligations of stateless people and national administrative frameworks to deal with this issue.

Constraints

Ongoing efforts to reduce irregular migration, including smuggling and trafficking, as well as increasingly strict border control and migration management systems will continue to make it difficult for refugees to enter EU territory and have access to asylum procedures. The economic situation in the subregion will result in greater restrictiveness in the interpretation of States' obligations to asylum-seekers, including with regard to reception conditions and measures to facilitate refugee integration.

Most of the countries in the region have no national legislation on the rights and obligations of stateless people, whose numbers are relatively small. The issue is not therefore perceived as a priority by politicians or NGOs.

A challenge for the years to come is the potential escalation of xenophobic sentiments towards refugees and migrants in the region, which may be aggravated by the economic crisis.

Operations

In 2011, UNHCR will focus on the following activities, based on its objectives for the year.

To ensure that asylum-seekers reaching the external borders of the EU are granted effective access to the territory and to asylum procedures, border monitoring will remain an important element of UNHCR's work. The Office will also help in

developing national quality assurance mechanisms that can be applied in refugee status determination procedures. This includes informing asylum-seekers on their rights and responsibilities. UNHCR will work to prevent the unlawful detention of asylum-seekers, while for any who are detained, UNHCR will monitor the conditions of detention and access to free legal assistance.

The Office will continue its work on integration, drawing attention to the impact of reception conditions on the subsequent integration of refugees. This also includes advocacy for services enabling asylum-seekers to achieve self-reliance and to develop skills that would facilitate their integration, if recognized as refugees. In addition, the Office will advocate for policies to support the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. This is in line with the proposals and recommendations made in UNHCR's *Note on the Integration of Refugees in Central Europe*, issued in April 2009, including those pertaining to refugees' acquisition of nationality.

The Regional Office in Budapest will encourage governments in the subregion to review their educational, health, social welfare and employment legislation and policies, with the aim of recognizing and responding to the needs of refugees, improving their access to services on the basis of equality. It will seek to facilitate refugee family reunification through policy development and advocacy, and the identification of precedent-setting cases will be pursued. It also plans to pilot the Integration Evaluation Tool developed by UNHCR in cooperation with the Migration Policy Group, which will serve as a yardstick to assess States' compliance with EU standards on the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR will review its procedures on sexual and gender-based violence with governments in the subregion, examining referral mechanisms to ensure that they address the

needs of refugees in urban settings. The age, gender and diversity participatory assessment methodology will be adjusted and applied to monitoring protection gaps, and to responding to the needs of urban refugees. UNHCR will also work to establish refugee advisory or consultative fora in collective reception facilities, where they do not yet exist.

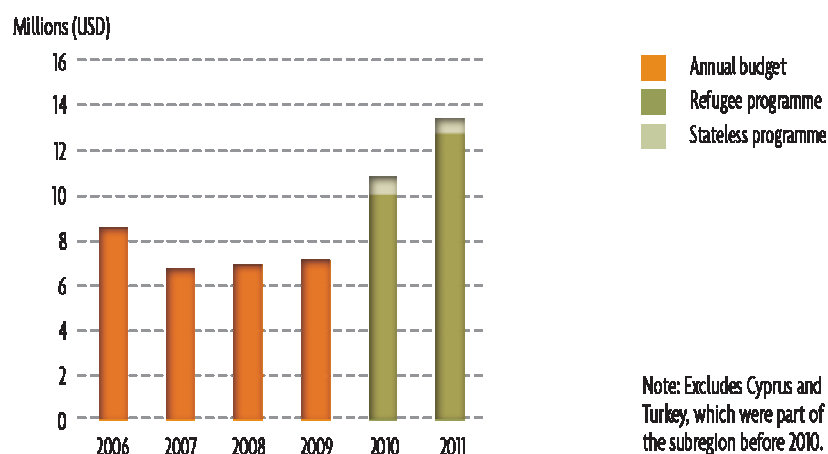
The Office will provide advice and advocacy for the establishment of small-scale resettlement programmes in all countries in the region, participating in projects funded through the European Refugee Fund. Resettlement and relocation activities in the region will be monitored closely, in order to identify good practice as well as shortcomings that need to be addressed. In addition, UNHCR will work with governments to ensure that the ETCs in Romania and Slovakia continue to function smoothly.

The process of identifying stateless people and providing them with access to public services will be monitored. Where there is no such process, UNHCR will seek to have one established. A coherent regional protection strategy for stateless people will be elaborated to address any shortcomings. Accession to the two Statelessness Conventions is a priority, as not all countries in the subregion are party to them. UNHCR will work closely with governments to ensure correct implementation of both instruments, after having identified any gaps in national law and practice.

Financial information

UNHCR's 2011 budget in Central Europe represents a slight increase compared to 2010. The 2011 budget includes, among other things, the Emergency Transit Centre in Slovakia, costs relating to the Integration Evaluation Tool, and to the monitoring of reception conditions.

UNHCR's budget in Central Europe 2006 – 2011



UNHCR budget for Central Europe (USD)

OPERATION	2010 REVISED BUDGET	2011				TOTAL
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	
Hungary Regional Office ¹	9,687,769	9,134,917	648,189	0	0	9,783,106
Regional activities	1,070,918	3,556,548	0	0	0	3,556,548
Total	10,758,687	12,691,465	648,189	0	0	13,339,654

¹ Includes activities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.