

| WORKING ENVIRONMENT |

UNHCR's work in Europe ranges from promoting fair and efficient asylum systems and facilitating local integration, to providing protection in mixed migration contexts, intervening in displacement emergencies and searching for durable solutions. Advocacy with States and institutions, engagement with civil society and the media, are high priorities in the region.

Differences among the asylum systems of various States of the European Union (EU) demand that all EU members engage in more practical cooperation and responsibility sharing. For its part, UNHCR will contribute to the ongoing development of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). It will also monitor and support the operation of effective asylum systems and local integration initiatives, including family reunification. In addition, UNHCR will work with non-EU States, such as the countries of Eastern Europe, the southern Caucasus and western Balkans, to strengthen their asylum systems.

With Croatia joining the European Union in 2013 and other countries firmly engaged in accession processes, South-Eastern Europe is becoming an increasingly busy pathway for mixed flows of migrants and asylum-seekers moving towards Western Europe. In the Eastern Europe operational region, asylum systems remain fragile and vulnerable to political changes and sensitivities. Here, UNHCR is concerned about access to territory and asylum procedures, instances of *refoulement*, a rise in the number of deportations of people of concern, low recognition rates and, in some countries, the increasing use of complementary forms of protection for people who fulfil the criteria for refugee status. Large-scale internal displacement also remains a challenge in Eastern Europe; for instance, up to a million people are still displaced in the Caucasus region.

Iraqi refugees
disembark in Hanover,
Germany, where they
have been resettled.





EUROPE

The largest groups of asylum-seekers in Europe are from Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Kosovo (Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)) and Somalia. These are now being supplemented by Syrians, more than 80,000 of whom crossed into Turkey and other countries neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic between April 2011 and September 2012. Turkey has offered noteworthy and welcome support to the Syrians by allowing them access to its territory, promoting temporary protection and accommodating the majority in camps.

Turkey also saw a significant increase in the number of Iraqi asylum-seekers during the second half of 2011 and first half of 2012. As such, the development of refugee status determination (RSD) and other protection mechanisms in Turkey is of particular importance, in view of both the country's position as a transit point for a large number of refugees and asylum-seekers and its candidature for EU membership.

The number of Syrian asylum-seekers in EU Member States has also grown, particularly in Germany and Sweden. Most EU States adhere to UNHCR's advice to refrain from forcibly removing Syrians, and grant protection to those in need of it.

The asylum and migration flows within Europe call for protection-sensitive border management in line with States' international obligations. Rescue at sea, disembarkation and responsibility sharing to ensure access to protection for those who need it are major challenges in the Mediterranean and other European maritime frontier regions. UNHCR will continue its engagement with States and others on these issues, as well as on the issue of human trafficking and unaccompanied and separated children.

With the 2012 accession of Bulgaria, Portugal and the Republic of Moldova to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, and Hungary's decision to lift its reservations to the 1954 Convention, 36 of the 49 States in Europe are now party to the 1954 Convention. Twenty-four are party to the 1961 Convention. UNHCR is working with Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine to help them fulfil their pledges during the December 2011 Intergovernmental commemorative event to accede to one or both instruments. It will also advocate for the establishment of status determination procedures in those States parties to the 1954 Convention that do not yet have them in place.

UNHCR's Regional Representation for Central Europe in Budapest will be streamlined in 2013. With the forthcoming admission of

Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen zone, protection capacity in these countries will be reinforced and the office in Slovakia closed. Further, given Poland's position as an EU border country and the priority accorded to UNHCR's relations with the European border agency Frontex, UNHCR's national office in Warsaw will be upgraded to international status.

| Strategic objectives |

○ *Safeguarding asylum space, access to territory and acceptable reception conditions for persons of concern, including those with special needs*

Ensuring access to fair and efficient asylum systems remains at the centre of UNHCR's activities in Europe, where improving the quality of decisions, minimizing the use of detention, providing support to unaccompanied and separated children and promoting gender-appropriate policies on protection are priorities.

UNHCR will intensify its involvement with the implementation of CEAS in 2013, after legislative amendments to EU asylum law are finalized. A new early-warning mechanism under the Dublin Regulation, involving the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), will offer a way to identify the needs for support among EU Member States. UNHCR will continue to promote more effective responsibility-sharing, especially in light of the negative impact of the Dublin Regulation upon many asylum-seekers.

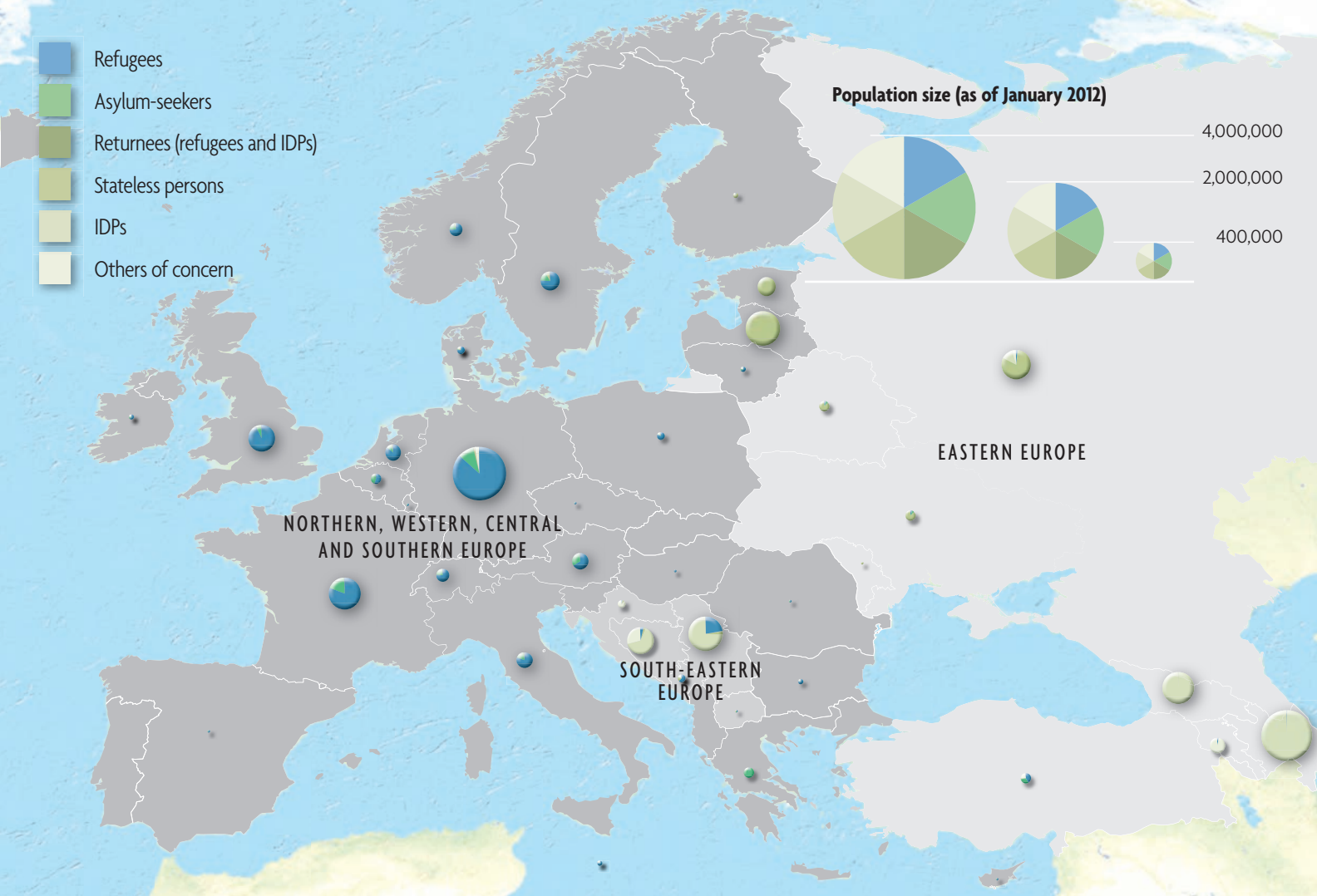
In South-Eastern Europe, UNHCR will pursue a rights-based inter-agency approach to ensure that people in mixed-migration flows who are in need of international protection are identified and their protection needs assessed fairly. Where possible, such people will be assisted to integrate locally.

In Eastern Europe, UNHCR will focus on quality assurance measures to strengthen national asylum systems, including through improvements to asylum systems at borders and reception conditions.

○ *Building and maintaining effective asylum and protection systems*

UNHCR will assist national authorities to improve protection for people with particular needs by promoting the incorporation of age, gender and diversity (AGD) considerations into all programmes. Engagement with the judiciary will be strengthened through training, involvement in selected legal cases before the courts, and dialogue with legal networks.

UNHCR will cooperate with EASO to support asylum reform in Greece. The Office remains involved in asylum procedures in France, Italy



and Spain and provides comments and guidance on asylum legislation and policy in all European States. Papers on the asylum situation in specific countries in Europe will be issued where they can serve to strengthen protection policies and practice. UNHCR will also support national quality assurance activities and mechanisms. Furthermore, standard operational procedures to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) will be implemented in Central European countries.

Collaboration will include work with the OSCE to bring displacement and protection issues into the mainstream of conflict management programmes; for example, through a jointly developed protection checklist for the various stages of the conflict cycle in OSCE field missions in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

○ *Securing durable solutions*

The integration of beneficiaries of protection into their new societies remains a challenge in many countries. Strengthening integration capacity, promoting family reunification, identifying good practices and preventing and monitoring hate crimes will be part of UNHCR's work in 2013. This will include implementing a European Refugee Fund project in eight countries to, among other things, evaluate refugee integration.

UNHCR will work with EU institutions, governments and civil society to increase the number of resettlement places offered by EU countries, with a target of 20,000 annually by 2020. It will cooperate with Germany to implement the country's new resettlement programme, while Belgium and Spain will be assisted to resettle 100 and 80 refugees, respectively. Emergency transit centres in Romania and the Slovak Republic will provide intermediate safe havens for refugees destined for resettlement. UNHCR will also continue its collaboration with established resettlement countries and concerned organizations, including IOM and the International Catholic Migration Commission.

In the Balkans, UNHCR will sharpen its focus on protection and asylum systems and work with development agencies to implement sustainable durable solutions. In line with the outcome of the Donors' Conference held in Sarajevo in April 2012, UNHCR will retain a substantive protection role in the region by monitoring the Regional Housing Programme. This is an important initiative geared towards achieving a comprehensive durable solutions strategy to end a protracted displacement situation. A dialogue has begun on the implementation of the Cessation Clauses for Croatians and Bosnians who became refugees

Financial information

The 2013 comprehensive budget for Europe is USD 197 million. It includes continued support for the asylum reform process in Greece.

This is an increase of USD 2.2 million in comparison with the current 2012 budget of USD 194.8 million. However, the budget will be further revised to address additional needs related to Syrian refugees in Turkey, which could not be assessed at the time this budget was approved.

Most of the operational budget in Europe is allocated for refugees (73 per cent). Another 6 per cent is allocated for stateless people, some 4 per cent for reintegration activities and 17 per cent for IDPs.

as a result of the 1991-1994 Balkan conflict. In Eastern Europe, UNHCR will redouble its efforts to find solutions for 1,000 Afghan refugees in the Russian Federation, while in Armenia it will help the most vulnerable people of concern to achieve self-reliance. Local partners and institutions will be mobilized to support local integration.

○ Preventing and resolving situations of statelessness

The causes of statelessness in Europe are diverse, linked not only to the dissolution of States but also to inadequate birth registration and gaps in migration and asylum systems. UNHCR will increase its advocacy with governments and other key stakeholders for accession to the Statelessness Conventions by non-signatory States and to identify gaps in the provision of protection and solutions.

UNHCR supports the establishment of new statelessness determination procedures, as done by Georgia and the Republic of Moldova in 2012, and efforts to strengthen existing ones, as in Hungary. Upon the completion of statelessness mapping exercises in Baltic and Nordic States, a conference in early 2013 will discuss ways to address and reduce statelessness in these countries.

Regional efforts to ensure that members of the Roma minority receive documentation and benefit from civil registration, including projects linked to the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, will receive strong UNHCR support. In South-Eastern Europe, UNHCR will assist those seeking to obtain civil-status documentation and late birth registration.

○ Strengthening UNHCR's external relations and mobilizing support

Raising awareness of international protection and displacement issues and promoting positive public attitudes towards refugees will remain key priorities for UNHCR. To this end, it will engage with national and regional media, and cooperate with European institutions and agencies via liaison offices in Vienna (OSCE), Strasbourg (Council of Europe), Malta (EASO) and Warsaw (Frontex).

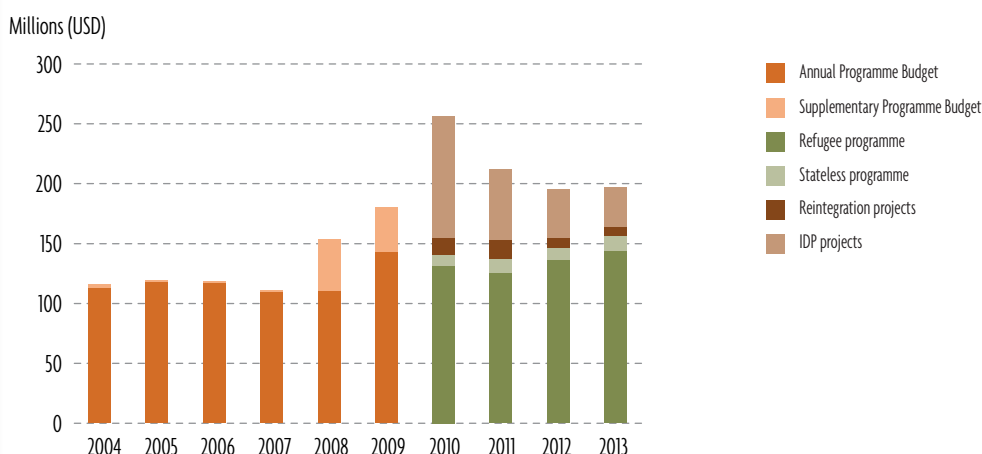
Moreover, the Office will cooperate with the Council of Europe and its different bodies to promote access for refugees and asylum-seekers to social and economic rights in Europe.

| Challenges |

Responses to mixed migratory movements need to be enhanced across the European Union's eastern and southern borders with a specific focus on strengthening the delivery of protection the western Balkans and Eastern Europe. Obstacles to access to territory and divergences and gaps in procedures mean that not all refugees receive the protection they need. Improving the quality of procedures is especially important in countries that are in line for EU accession, which are often used by asylum seekers as transit destinations.

Some States in Eastern Europe have disregarded interim judgments of the European Court for Human Rights, resulting in several cases of *refoulement*. Ensuring that refugee law is observed in the face of extradition requests by countries of origin remains a challenge in some Eastern European States.

UNHCR's budget in Europe 2004 - 2013



UNHCR BUDGET IN EUROPE | USD

Operation	2012 Revised budget (as of 30 June 2012)	2013				Total
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	
EASTERN EUROPE						
Armenia	4,448,602	4,051,310	70,000	0	0	4,121,310
Azerbaijan	5,916,430	4,527,791	323,577	0	1,048,634	5,900,002
Georgia	14,959,095	2,128,385	802,505	0	12,027,628	14,958,518
Russian Federation	10,094,175	7,737,377	593,503	0	0	8,330,881
Turkey	32,256,776	42,901,349	173,391	0	0	43,074,740
Ukraine Regional Office ¹	9,207,759	11,499,055	1,315,000	0	0	12,814,055
Subtotal	76,882,836	72,845,268	3,277,976	0	13,076,262	89,199,506
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE						
Bosnia and Herzegovina	15,029,004	3,401,137	1,635,388	0	4,117,965	9,154,490
Croatia	5,002,999	1,622,263	408,355	2,969,382	0	5,000,000
Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999))	12,005,007	3,127,063	1,371,308	4,251,861	216,667	8,966,898
Montenegro	4,550,882	4,298,063	247,815	0	0	4,545,879
Serbia	23,008,300	2,132,422	1,202,358	0	15,915,221	19,250,000
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3,985,647	3,597,817	385,829	0	0	3,983,646
Subtotal	63,581,840	18,178,765	5,251,053	7,221,243	20,249,852	50,900,913
NORTHERN, WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE						
Belgium Regional Office ²	15,291,335	12,667,947	1,710,838	0	0	14,378,785
Hungary Regional Office ³	11,143,005	9,903,173	1,389,143	0	0	11,292,316
Italy Regional Office ⁴	18,958,690	21,016,381	210,702	0	0	21,227,083
Spain	1,520,606	1,430,778	28,343	0	0	1,459,121
Sweden Regional Office ⁵	2,786,892	2,600,465	773,066	0	0	3,373,531
Regional activities	4,604,653	5,167,316	0	0	0	5,167,316
Subtotal	54,305,180	52,786,061	4,112,091	0	0	56,898,152
Total	194,769,857	143,810,094	12,641,120	7,221,243	33,326,114	196,998,571

¹ Includes activities in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova.

² Includes activities in Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Liaison Office in Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

³ Includes activities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

⁴ Includes activities in Albania, Cyprus, Greece, and Malta.

⁵ Includes activities in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway.

Difficulties also persist with regard to situations of internal displacement in the northern and southern Caucasus and in ending displacement in Kosovo (S/RES/ 1244 (1999)) and the countries of the western Balkans, especially among marginalized communities such as the Roma.

UNHCR has highlighted the difficult situation of asylum-seekers, including those in detention, in some European countries. There is a strong need to ensure that asylum-seekers are detained only as a measure of last resort, with adequate safeguards and in acceptable conditions.

Reception conditions which meet the needs of all those asking for protection have not yet been established in all EU States. Difficulties in securing adequate accommodation, including for persons with special needs, persist. To address the specific situation of unaccompanied and separated children, UNHCR will continue to work with Western European and Nordic countries on forthcoming best interest determination guidelines.

The economic difficulties experienced by some countries in

Western Europe have cut into the services available for refugees. The tone of public debate on asylum has hardened, compelling UNHCR to intensify efforts to address racism and xenophobia directed at refugees.

In Eastern Europe, limited resources make it difficult for some governments to comply with their commitments to meet international standards in refugee protection. Again, xenophobia and racism stand as obstacles to refugee integration.

Turkey will continue to face challenges in meeting the needs of an increasing urban refugee population. ■