



**Albania**

**Andorra**

**Austria**

**Belgium**

**Bulgaria**

**Cyprus**

**Czech Republic**

**Denmark**

**Estonia**

**Finland**

**France**

**Germany**

**Greece**

**The Holy See**

**Hungary**

**Iceland**

**Ireland**

**Italy**

**Latvia**

**Liechtenstein**

**Lithuania**

**Luxembourg**

**Malta**

**Monaco**

**Netherlands**

**Norway**

**Poland**

**Portugal**

**Romania**

**San Marino**

**Slovakia**

**Slovenia**

**Spain**

**Sweden**

**Switzerland**

**United Kingdom of**

**Great Britain and**

**Northern Ireland**

Asylum-seekers at the federal asylum reception centre in Kapellen, Belgium.

# Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe

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## Working environment

The operational subregion, covering 36 countries in Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe, remained a major region of asylum in 2012. Twenty-seven of the countries are members of the European Union (EU) and are working to implement a Common European Asylum System. Other countries in the region have followed this process closely and are harmonizing their systems with that of the European Union. Nevertheless, variations in refugee protection systems abound, and while some countries may receive only a few asylum applications in a year, others register close to 50,000.

The year 2011 marked the first increase in asylum-seeker numbers in several years, a trend which continued through the first six months of 2012. The top two receiving countries remain France and Germany, followed closely by Sweden, which has taken over third place from Italy.

The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) has led to significantly increased asylum applications by Syrians, most of them in Germany and Sweden. Other major countries of origin are Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Serbia, Somalia, and the Russian Federation. The subregion hosts a large number of refugees, and several countries have established resettlement programmes.

Migration and refugee movements to Europe from Afghanistan, Iraq, North Africa and Somalia continue to pose challenges for UNHCR as it seeks to ensure that border controls are protection-sensitive and national asylum systems are in line with international norms. Ensuring access to fair and efficient

asylum systems is therefore at the centre of UNHCR's activities in the region. Other priorities are to persuade States to reduce the use of detention, provide support to unaccompanied and separated children and raise awareness of gender issues in protection.

UNHCR works closely with European States, EU institutions and other stakeholders to support the operation of national asylum systems and develop other protection responses based on solidarity and responsibility-sharing. It provided input to the development of the Common European Asylum System in 2012, including reform of legislation and reinforcement of practical cooperation on asylum, among other policy areas.

Economic difficulties have cut into the availability of State services for the integration of refugees. UNHCR also remains concerned about incidents of racism and xenophobia directed at refugees. It is exploring new ways to address these problems by reaching out to new partners and raising the awareness of the general public about the plight of the displaced.

## Strategy

UNHCR's offices in the countries of the subregion are coordinated by regional offices in Brussels, Budapest, Rome and Stockholm, as well as a stand-alone country office in Spain. UNHCR's liaison offices work with the OSCE in Vienna, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in Malta and the EU external border agency, Frontex, based in Warsaw.

Partnerships will remain at the core of UNHCR's work as it advocates for fair asylum procedures, as well as support for the integration of refugees and access to employment and housing for all people of concern. UNHCR also works with NGOs to promote dialogue between Governments and diverse groups of refugees in aid of national asylum policy development. In its drive to assist countries in the subregion to raise their protection standards, it will offer advice on best practice, comment on legal instruments and engage with national and regional courts.

## Constraints

A difficult economic situation and the growth of negative attitudes towards foreigners have prompted stricter policies towards asylum in some areas. Popular support for restrictive policies undermines political support for efforts to establish more equitable responsibility-sharing mechanisms and solidarity with countries beyond the subregion.

## Operations

### • Safeguarding international protection space and building effective asylum systems

Following the amendment of EU asylum laws, in 2013 UNHCR will give priority to working with national authorities and European institutions to ensure protection-oriented implementation of the changes. UNHCR's efforts to ensure quality decision making will aim not only at the correct application of legal standards, but also at ensuring age- and gender-appropriate procedures.

UNHCR will continue its direct involvement in the asylum procedure in France, Greece, Italy and Spain. Support for the Greek asylum reform process, including the new Asylum Service, will be strengthened.

Continued reliance on the Dublin II Regulation to determine the State responsible for assessing an asylum claim, as well as the use of readmission agreements with countries outside the Schengen and Dublin II countries, raises questions about whether acceptable protection standards are being met in all countries concerned.

UNHCR will continue to monitor different aspects of national asylum systems. Along with the monitoring of

reception conditions, this work will focus on victims of trafficking, durable solutions and advocacy to limit the use of detention with regard to applicants for international protection.

Standard operational procedures to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) will be developed and implemented in Central European countries as well as in Austria and Malta. UNHCR will assist in the development of national strategies to counter trafficking and promote the establishment of referral mechanisms for victims.

Based on a 2012 survey of public attitudes, UNHCR will develop training in order to communicate its concerns to the wider public in the region. Many of the initiatives in this area will be aimed at young people in particular.

### • Access to territorial protection and fair asylum procedures, including at borders

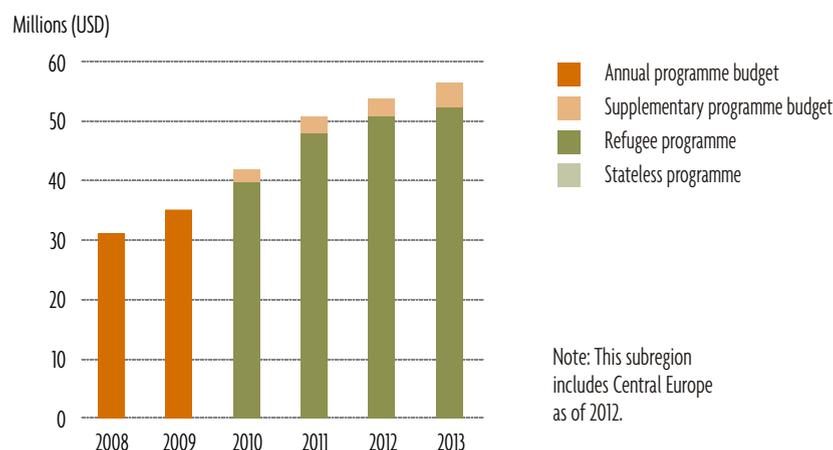
To ensure protection-sensitive border management and prevent arbitrary detention, UNHCR will work closely with Governments and Frontex. It will also develop training materials on international protection and asylum for EU border guards, as well as monitoring border procedures. UNHCR will promote alternatives to detention and advocate that this be used only as a measure of last resort.

Based on new EU standards for the reception of asylum-seekers, the Office will monitor national laws and practices to ensure their satisfactory implementation. Best practices will be identified in relation to unaccompanied or separated children, for whom new UNHCR guidelines on best interest determinations will be issued.

The subregion has experienced an increase in applications from asylum-seekers from South-Eastern European countries, many of Roma origin. UNHCR will review country practices and support ongoing efforts for Roma inclusion in Europe.

UNHCR will work with Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain to follow up on their 2011 pledges to accede to one or both of the Statelessness Conventions. Studies on existing gaps in legislation or practices to address statelessness have been carried out in Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Additional studies are being undertaken in the Baltic and Nordic countries, as well as in Malta, the Slovakia and Slovenia. A conference on statelessness will be organized for the Nordic and Baltic States in early 2013.

## UNHCR's budget in Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe 2008 – 2013



## Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe

### ● Promoting durable solutions

The integration of refugees remains difficult in many countries. UNHCR will finalize an EU-funded integration project in eight European countries: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden. The project will build integration capacity at both national and local levels as well as gauge the level of refugee integration.

Family reunification, local capacity to support integration, identification of best practices and prevention and monitoring of hate crimes will be areas of intense focus in UNHCR's work. In Cyprus and Malta, direct support for integration efforts will receive priority.

UNHCR and its partners have set the ambitious target of 20,000 refugees resettled in the region by 2020. UNHCR will continue to help EU institutions to implement the Joint European Resettlement Programme. The Emergency Transit Centres in Romania and Slovakia will receive additional funding and upgrades as they play an important role in providing a safe haven for resettled refugees.

### ● Mobilizing resources and support for UNHCR's work worldwide

The contributions of EU and other States in the subregion represent a vital source of funds for UNHCR and contribute to support the other regions hosting the majority of the world's displaced. This support will be critically important in 2013 and beyond. UNHCR will work with concerned States and institutions to identify major needs and develop responses aimed at achieving maximum impact.

### | Financial information |

The budget for the subregion shows a 4.6 per cent increase between 2012-2013, from USD 54.3 million to USD 56.9 million. This is mainly due to intensified support for efforts to reform the asylum system in Greece. Elsewhere in the subregion budgets are either stable or have been cut. Nearly 93 per cent of the 2013 budget is allocated for refugees and asylum-seekers, with the remaining 7 per cent for stateless people.

## UNHCR's budget in Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe (USD)

OPERATION	2012 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2012)	2013		
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	TOTAL
Belgium Regional Office <sup>1</sup>	15,291,335	12,667,947	1,710,838	14,378,785
Hungary Regional Office <sup>2</sup>	11,143,005	9,903,173	1,389,143	11,292,316
Italy Regional Office <sup>3</sup>	18,958,690	21,016,381	210,702	21,227,083
Spain	1,520,606	1,430,778	28,343	1,459,121
Sweden Regional Office <sup>4</sup>	2,786,892	2,600,465	773,066	3,373,531
Regional activities	4,604,653	5,167,316	0	5,167,316
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,305,180</b>	<b>52,786,061</b>	<b>4,112,091</b>	<b>56,898,152</b>

<sup>1</sup>Includes activities in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Liaison Office in Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup>Includes activities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>3</sup>Includes activities in Albania, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta.

<sup>4</sup>Includes activities in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden.