

UNHCR Liaison Office to the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) and Vienna-based UN Agencies

February 2024

HIGHLIGHTS

Persons under UNHCR’s mandate:

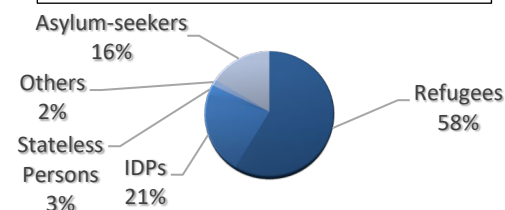
As of mid-2023, there were some **22.9 million forcibly displaced or stateless people under UNHCR’s mandate within the OSCE area**¹. This number has increased significantly since 2014, when it stood at just 5.2 million individuals.

Source: [UNHCR 2023 Mid-Year Trends Report](#)

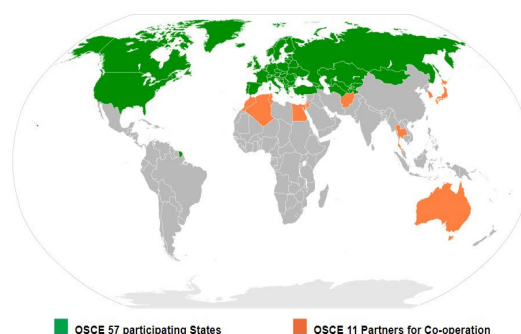
Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People in the OSCE Area:

Refugees	13,424,765
Internally displaced people (IDPs)	4,837,020
Asylum-seekers	3,727,828
Stateless people	586,376
Others of concern	370,420
Total²	22,946,409

22.9 million persons under UNHCR’s mandate in the OSCE region



OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation³



UNHCR’s Co-operation with the OSCE

- In 1998, the OSCE and UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on enhancing co-operation. Further agreements followed focusing specifically on Kosovo (2011) and Ukraine (2014). In 2020, concrete areas of collaboration were specified in an Addendum to update the 1998 MoU. UNHCR also maintains specific MoUs with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), with a focus on human rights and statelessness.
- Since 1998, the OSCE and UNHCR have cooperated on a wide range of topics across the OSCE region based on mutual recognition of mandates, focusing largely on addressing conflict and displacement. Owing to the increasing complexity of conflicts – including post-conflict situations – the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, IDPs and stateless people is relevant to all three OSCE security dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimension.
- UNHCR promotes respect for the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people at all phases of the conflict cycle, and as such co-operates with the OSCE on early warning, conflict prevention, conflict management and resolution efforts (including in South Caucasus, Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, and Central Asia).

¹ The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) comprises of 57 [participating States](#).

² Total sum after deduction of double status (e.g. stateless persons who are also refugees or asylum-seekers).

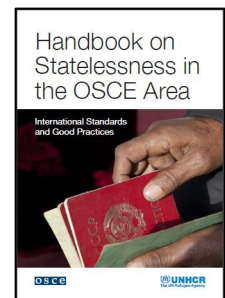
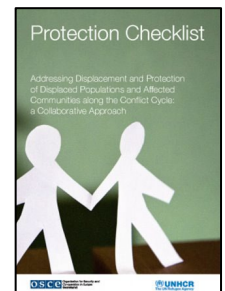
³ Source: [Helsinki Accords - New World Encyclopedia](#) (2023).

Structure of UNHCR Liaison Office Vienna (LOV)

- Liaison with the OSCE was first established by the then UNHCR Regional Office Vienna in 1998, which had primarily focused on thematic issues relating to the aftermath of the Bosnian and the emerging Kosovo crises.
- Since 2002, engagement with the OSCE has been further institutionalized in the form of a Liaison Unit, and following enhanced co-operation, today encompasses a broader thematic and geographical basis. In 2007, the Unit was transformed into a Liaison Office Vienna (LOV), with LOV progressively assuming further responsibilities both in terms of scope of counterparts (e.g. UNODC, ICMPD) as well as thematic coverage. Since 2014, LOV is comprised of three staff members and one intern.

General Activities of UNHCR LOV

- LOV's general activities include representing UNHCR at the OSCE, liaising with the 57 OSCE participating States, 11 Partners for Co-operation, and its Executive Structures (Conflict Prevention Centre, Transnational Threats Department, Border Management Staff College, Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings). This collaboration has resulted in joint projects on capacity building, such as the [Protection Checklist: Addressing Displacement and Protection of Displaced Populations and Affected Communities along the Conflict Cycle](#), the project [Combating Human Trafficking along Migration Routes](#), and the [Handbook on Statelessness in the OSCE Area: International Standards and Good Practices](#).
- LOV also collaborates with other Vienna-based Organizations, such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the Vienna Master of Arts in Applied Human Rights, and other international organizations, NGOs, think tanks, and institutions.



2024 Priorities

UNHCR LOV priorities for 2024 include:

- Continuing advocacy on international protection for persons under UNHCR's mandate, including in protracted conflict situations, and providing guidance on protection issues in the OSCE region (with a focus on Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, Central Asia) and beyond (Afghanistan, Mediterranean).
- Addressing statelessness in partnership with ODIHR and HCNM, in the context of the last year of the #IBELONG Campaign and supporting the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, also in follow-up to the high-level regional conference on ending statelessness in south-east Europe held in 2023.
- Capacity-building on forced displacement and protection issues for OSCE field staff together with the Conflict Prevention Centre, including on the Protection Checklist, and within the courses of the Border Management Staff College.
- Dissemination of information and continued co-operation with the OSCE and other partners on issues related to hate crime, hate speech, statelessness, protection-sensitive border management, trafficking in human beings, mixed migration, durable solutions such as return and integration, alternative pathways, racism and xenophobia, climate change and other areas of common interest.
- Strengthening co-operation on issues related to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants with UNODC and the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.