

EASTERN EUROPE



UNHCR

2014 - 2015
GLOBAL APPEAL

Armenia

Azerbaijan

Belarus

Georgia

Republic of Moldova

Russian Federation

Turkey

Ukraine



After studying in the Republic of Moldova 10 years ago, this young Syrian doctor has returned as a refugee from the current conflict (2012)

UNHCR / D. DORU





Working environment

UNHCR works with a wide variety of people of concern in Eastern Europe, ranging from asylum-seekers within mixed-migration flows, refugees and returnees to internally displaced people (IDPs) and stateless people. Compared to other parts of the world, Eastern Europe receives a relatively low number of asylum-seekers. However, frequent reorganizations of State bodies responsible for border management, migration and asylum and the priority given to political and other considerations can leave national asylum systems either dysfunctional or lagging far behind international norms.

Other major challenges for UNHCR in the subregion are ensuring access to territory and asylum procedures for all people of concern and preventing *refoulement*, deportation or extradition. Recognition rates in the subregion are low, and some countries are increasingly resorting to complementary forms of protection instead of recognition based on 1951 Convention status. Also troubling are limited access to protection for some nationalities and poor integration opportunities, leading many asylum-seekers in Eastern Europe to make repeated attempts to reach other countries perceived to be more liberal. Resettlement continues to be the only solution for many people of concern.

The impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), has also been felt in the subregion, particularly in Turkey. The continued massive influx since the beginning of the crisis has placed considerable pressure on the protection and emergency response capacity in the country, and UNHCR provides support to the Government in coping with the protection and assistance needs of refugees.

To fill the protection gaps in the region, UNHCR launched the Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus in relation to asylum issues, in six countries in 2013. The project's main goal is to improve the quality of refugee status determination (RSD) decisions. The Government of the Russian Federation approved the State Migration Policy

Concept for the period up to 2025. This will result in a comprehensive review of a series of legislative acts, including the law on refugees.

Positive developments in Eastern Europe include accession by Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the Statelessness Conventions, with the latter having moved quickly to establish a statelessness determination procedure. The activation of a status determination procedure by Georgia, which has acceded to the 1954 Statelessness Convention, has helped reduce the number of stateless people in the country.

Statelessness, arising mainly as a consequence of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the difficulties facing national minorities seeking to prove

their citizenship, remains a serious concern throughout the subregion. The Russian Federation's adoption of an amendment to the Citizenship Law seeks to address the situation of stateless former Soviet citizens. UNHCR estimated that there were some 250,000 stateless people in Eastern Europe in 2012.

Internal displacement is another major challenge in Eastern Europe. Up to a million people are still displaced in the Caucasus region alone. UNHCR protects and assists Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in most countries in the region in accordance with the UN's *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. It promotes durable solutions, including return and local integration whenever possible, while encouraging governments to play a greater role in meeting the needs of IDPs.

Strategies

- A major feature of UNHCR's work in Eastern Europe will be to strengthen national asylum systems so that they are fully in line with international standards. This will include improving legislative frameworks and procedures, while increasing the capacity of local authorities. Where necessary, UNHCR will intervene directly to ensure that people of concern are adequately protected and their essential needs are met. The search for durable solutions will focus primarily on return and local integration.
- The Office will advocate for the prevention and reduction of statelessness, supporting the development of relevant national legislation and procedures, with respect to the naturalization of people of concern, while pressing for accession to the Statelessness Conventions.
- Partnerships with governments and other stakeholders under the framework of the 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed-Migration will form the basis of UNHCR's response to the needs of the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees.
- UNHCR will engage with UNDP and other development and humanitarian partners to monitor the progress of development programmes in improving the livelihoods of people of concern.
- Public awareness of refugee issues will be strongly promoted.

Challenges

In a number of Eastern European countries, political considerations and control of irregular migration take precedence over asylum despite a commitment to international protection principles by the authorities. Sometimes a fully functioning asylum system may be regarded as a hindrance to the administration of migration policies. A lack of resources for strengthening asylum systems also makes it difficult for some governments to comply with their commitments to meet international standards in refugee protection. As a consequence, refugees and asylum-seekers face restrictive registration policies, resulting in long waiting periods without assistance, documents and legal status. Xenophobia and racism place additional hurdles in the way of refugee integration.

Due to a lack of legal status or restrictive registration policies, many asylum-seekers and refugees are unable to gain access to State assistance and employment and remain dependent on the limited financial support offered by UNHCR. Local-integration schemes for recognized refugees throughout Eastern Europe are usually very limited in scope and receive little in the way of government funding.

Furthermore, in Turkey, reaching the many camps housing the growing population of Syrian refugees will be a challenge for UNHCR in 2014. These camps are located across a considerable expanse of territory, sometimes in remote locations. This will put additional pressure on the Office's capacity to support the Government of Turkey in addressing the protection and assistance needs of this population of concern.

Operations

The operation in **Turkey** is described in a separate country operation chapter.

In **Armenia**, UNHCR will continue to assist the authorities in building their asylum institutions. It will help strengthen the national legal framework governing the protection of refugees and stateless people so that it is in line with international standards. The use of standard operating procedures will be promoted to ensure sound, non-discriminatory decision-making.

| Implementation |

UNHCR will also advocate for legislation governing statelessness determination procedures.

Efforts will be made to assist the Government of Armenia to make migration management policies protection-sensitive. UNHCR will provide focused assistance to the most vulnerable individuals, mobilize local partners and institutions to support the local integration of refugees, and explore with the Government possible ways to assist Syrian refugees in the country. The Office will also encourage community-based activities, engendering capacity-

building among refugee community associations.

UNHCR will cooperate with the authorities in **Azerbaijan** to strengthen the national asylum system. It will seek an amendment to the current refugee legislation that establishes a subsidiary protection mechanism, which provides protection to a person who does not qualify as a refugee but who would face a real risk of *serious harm* if returned. The Office will also emphasize that refugees be given access to employment so they can increase their self-reliance and reduce dependence on humanitarian

assistance. Vulnerable refugees in urban areas will be targeted for assistance to make them as self-reliant as possible. At the same time, UNHCR will advocate for the protection of IDPs and provide them with free legal aid and self-reliance assistance. UNHCR will support the Government's efforts to find durable solutions and encourage it to follow up on its commitment to organize a comprehensive survey to identify the scope of statelessness in the country and establish a statelessness determination procedure.

The declared intent of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to adhere to European standards, as well as the amendment of the EU visa facilitation agreement between EU and Ukraine, provide opportunities for UNHCR to engage more actively with government counterparts to improve asylum systems. This is especially important in the case of Ukraine.

Strategic action in the three countries will be focused on: enhancing compliance with international standards through dialogue with government departments, particularly on protection-sensitive approaches to asylum issues; continuing protection monitoring to ensure access to territory and asylum procedures; using resettlement as a protection tool for those for whom integration in the region is not an option; mapping statelessness and developing a statelessness determination procedure (Ukraine) and supporting the implementation of a new statelessness determination procedure (the Republic of Moldova); and encouraging governments to assist for extremely vulnerable people of concern.

Where asylum standards fall short, UNHCR will intervene directly to ensure adequate protection of people of concern, particularly with regard to *refoulement*. UNHCR's engagement with the judiciary is vital, as it acts as a guarantor of quality and due process in the asylum procedure.

In **Georgia**, the strategy for 2014-2015 will build on the significant progress made so far in the areas of accession to international instruments, strengthening of the national legislative framework and development of Government action plans. The strategy will also focus on the effective implementation of national and international legislation and efforts to protect and improve the living conditions of displaced people.

UNHCR's protection-focused durable solutions strategy in Georgia will include monitoring the protection of all people of concern while providing them with limited direct assistance; pursuing durable solutions for refugees through naturalization and local integration, seeking local integration for IDPs pending their return; advocating for the adoption of refugee law and accession to the 1954 and 1961 statelessness instruments, and supporting the implementation of related procedures; working towards the compliance of existing legislation with international standards; advocating for more assistance to IDPs, with attention to livelihoods for people of concern in Abkhazia, the reduction of SGBV and the provision of legal aid to all IDPs; soliciting public understanding and support for UNHCR's work; and monitoring

the progress and implementation of transitional livelihood programmes for people of concern.

In the **Russian Federation**, UNHCR will focus on quality assurance measures to strengthen the national asylum system, including improving access to the system at borders, and will seek to enhance partnership with the authorities in achieving regional and global protection goals. UNHCR has made its expertise available to the Government in developing protection-sensitive, cross-border, migration and asylum management mechanisms.

The Office will pursue durable solutions for asylum-seekers in the Russian Federation by helping improve legal and social avenues for integration, while providing others, including those with particular vulnerabilities, with resettlement options. UNHCR's cooperation with the Russian authorities will focus on finding solutions for long-staying asylum-seekers who have been unable to regularize their situation in the country.

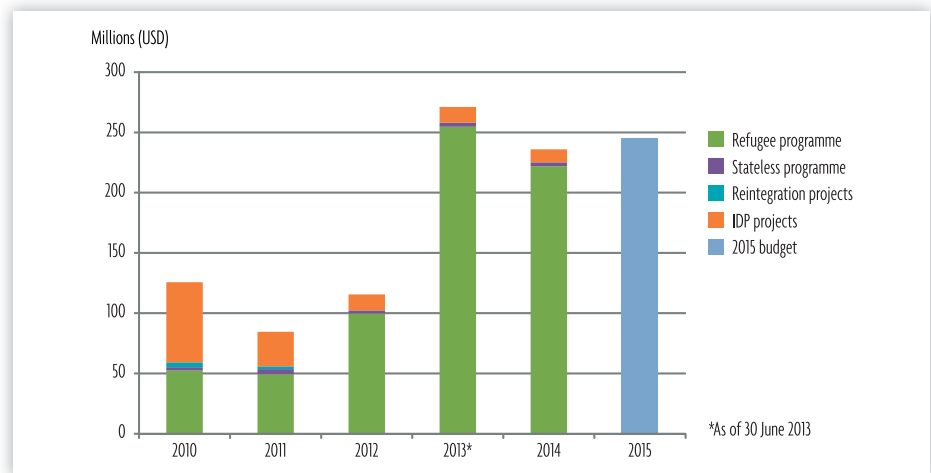
UNHCR will continue to advocate for measures to reduce statelessness, both within and outside the borders of the Russian Federation. It will also seek easier access to citizenship for former USSR citizens, as well as accession by the Russian Federation to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. Opportunities to raise awareness of displacement issues, engage in advocacy and enhance financial support for global displacement situations will be pursued.

Financial information

Over the last four years, UNHCR's financial requirements in the Eastern Europe subregion have fluctuated from USD 125.7 million in 2010 to a revised 2013 budget of USD 271.1 million. The subregion has seen decreases in several operations' budgets primarily due to UNHCR's gradual withdrawal from direct operational involvement with IDPs in a number of countries. At the same time, the financial requirements for UNHCR's activities in Turkey have increased dramatically in response to the needs arising from the Syria emergency.

In 2014, the overall financial requirements for Eastern Europe are set at USD 236 million. Excluding Turkey, the subregional budget amounts to USD 41 million. The majority of the overall budget, more than 90 per cent, is allocated to assisting refugees and asylum-seekers and to strengthening asylum systems, with the remainder allocated to the provision of protection and assistance to IDPs and stateless people.

Budgets for Eastern Europe | 2010–2015



Budgets for Eastern Europe | USD

Operation	2013 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2013)	2014			TOTAL	2015
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects		
Armenia	4,121,810	3,972,334	109,000	0	4,081,334	4,081,334
Azerbaijan	5,900,497	4,397,620	321,299	1,131,082	5,850,001	5,850,001
Georgia	14,958,517	2,824,660	578,014	9,692,035	13,094,709	13,094,709
Russian Federation	8,331,881	6,413,854	676,415	0	7,090,269	7,112,005
Turkey	226,058,401	194,962,505	44,000	0	195,006,505	204,262,690
Ukraine Regional Office	11,689,558	9,365,305	1,480,597	0	10,845,902	10,845,902
Total	271,060,664	221,936,277	3,209,325	10,823,117	235,968,720	245,246,641