



Eastern Europe

Working environment

Mixed migration has created a complex situation in Eastern Europe, particularly for those countries at the external borders of the European Union. Due to the increasingly impermeable borders of EU Member States, many asylum-seekers ask for international protection in countries they had only meant to transit, not make their final destination. This complicates UNHCR's efforts to advocate for fair, efficient and effective asylum systems in line with international standards.

Statelessness is another problem that is present throughout the region to various degrees, ranging from a few people in Armenia to more in the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Protracted internal displacement situations in the region stem from unresolved territorial conflicts and include Moldova (Transnistria) and Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh). Durable solutions, notably sustainable return, can only be found if these conflicts are resolved.

Armenia

Azerbaijan

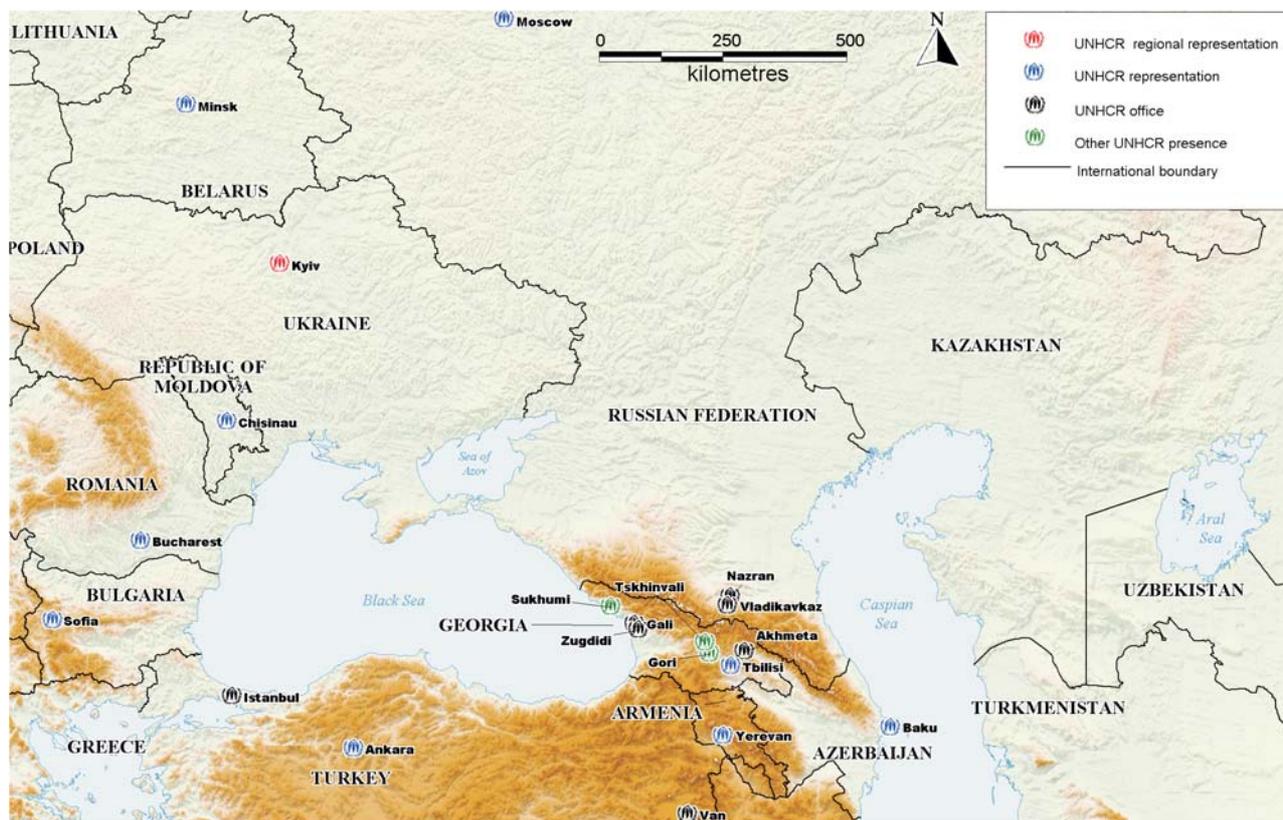
Belarus

Georgia

Republic of Moldova

Russian Federation

Ukraine



Strategy

UNHCR will seek to strengthen national asylum systems and safeguard asylum in the broader migration context through dynamic partnerships with the European Union, national governments and NGOs. The 10-Point Plan of Action for the eastern and south-eastern borders of the EU, adopted by UNHCR in 2007, serves as a blueprint on how to maintain asylum space.

The Office will pursue durable solutions wherever possible for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), including through acquisition of citizenship, local integration, voluntary repatriation, and resettlement in the case of refugees with specific needs. UNHCR will advocate for development actors such as UN Country Team members to include refugees in their target groups. Through needs assessments and outreach, a deeper understanding of sexual and gender-based violence will be developed to help improve responses among refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR also seeks to prevent and reduce statelessness in the region.

Constraints

Racist, xenophobic and generally foreigner-unfriendly attitudes affect the daily lives of asylum-seekers and refugees and cloud prospects for their local integration. This has made it difficult for countries in the region to

create local integration strategies for individuals who need international protection. UNHCR will continue its work with all partners, including Governments, to combat these negative perceptions.

Operations

The operations in the **Russian Federation** and **Georgia** are described in separate chapters.

In **Armenia**, UNHCR will address the obstacles to local integration, notably for naturalized refugees and those residing in rural, remote and border areas. The Office will advocate for the Government to extend housing and social assistance to the most vulnerable refugees. It will also help the Government build its capacity to deal with refugee issues and support the legislative process linked to the new asylum law. The Office is assisting the Government to meet international standards in the treatment of Iraqi refugees.

In **Azerbaijan**, UNHCR will implement temporary protection mechanisms to benefit asylum-seekers and refugees whose applications are not currently accepted by the authorities. At the same time, the Office will seek to improve Government refugee status determination (RSD) procedures and related legislation. Asylum-seekers and refugees with specific needs will benefit from assistance, and the Office will seek durable solutions wherever possible. UNHCR will also help the Government to fulfil its commitment to address the humanitarian issues facing IDPs.



Children were badly affected by the crisis in Georgia.

UNHCR/Mechitar

In **Belarus**, UNHCR's work is affected by the lack of a country agreement and the need to register technical and humanitarian assistance with the Government. Efforts to support the national asylum system and to implement RSD procedures continue. UNHCR is working with the Government to prepare for the implementation of a new Refugee Law. This would introduce a humanitarian status and temporary or complementary forms of protection, and thereby fill existing legislative gaps. Limited care and maintenance activities and, on a pilot basis, local integration assistance are provided to individuals with specific needs. In 2009, the Office will work to strengthen a border-monitoring mechanism and implement a subregional local integration strategy.

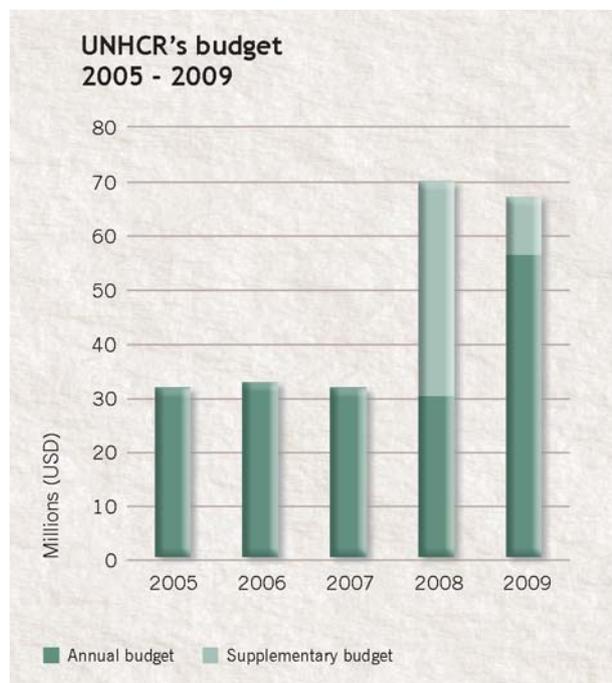
In **Moldova**, UNHCR will help the Bureau for Migration and Asylum to provide protection for asylum-seekers, refugees and others of concern. A new draft Refugee Law aimed at further aligning national legislation to European standards is expected to be adopted during the year. The Office also supports bilateral activities with Romania aimed at strengthening border cooperation and aligning national asylum systems. UNHCR and partner NGOs will provide some assistance to refugees and others of concern until sustainable integration programmes are developed and implemented by the Government.

In **Ukraine**, the Office cooperates with the Government to protect asylum-seekers, refugees, formerly deported people in Crimea, and stateless people. UNHCR is concerned about the low refugee recognition rate. The Office works closely with the authorities and has proposed amendments to the draft Law on Refugees which would introduce complementary and temporary forms of protection, as well as address existing gaps in the current legislation.

Assistance measures for asylum-seekers and refugees in Ukraine are limited. UNHCR will provide free legal aid and limited material, social and medical assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees. Draft legislation on free legal aid is under consideration and, if approved and funded by the Government, may enter into effect in 2010. UNHCR will also continue to strengthen its border monitoring capacity, under the framework of the 10-Point Plan of Action. The Regional Representation in Kyiv hosts the Secretariat for the Sökerköping Cross Border Cooperation Process which has, for over seven years, brought together Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine with seven new EU Member States alongside UNHCR and IOM to exchange experiences and build good practice on asylum, migration and border management issues. UNHCR hopes that the process continues to be funded, as it will encourage donors, partners and international agencies to promote proactive government participation in refugee matters.

Financial information

UNHCR's budgets in the region remained stable until the Georgian crisis in 2008. Requirements for the emergency response were presented in a supplementary programme that will continue in 2009. Furthermore, the Annual Programme Budget in Georgia will increase significantly as a result of the Global Needs Assessment Initiative. Reductions in the number of protection staff, exchange rate losses, commodity price increases and high inflation have weakened the purchasing power of UNHCR's budgets in the region.



Budget (USD)						
Countries	2008			2009		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Armenia	1,294,127	0	1,294,127	1,307,919	0	1,307,919
Azerbaijan	2,962,902	0	2,962,902	3,232,319	0	3,232,319
Belarus	1,007,851	0	1,007,851	921,280	0	921,280
Georgia	4,680,511	39,437,073	44,117,584	33,876,856	10,451,721	44,328,577
Republic of Moldova	606,496	0	606,496	698,176	0	698,176
Russian Federation	12,511,699	400,000	12,911,699	13,188,470	100,000	13,288,470
Ukraine	2,853,172	0	2,853,172	3,029,672	0	3,029,672
Regional activities ¹	50,000	0	50,000	100,000	0	100,000
Total	25,966,758	39,837,073	65,803,831	56,354,692	10,551,721	66,906,413

¹ Includes activities in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

Note: Supplementary programme budgets exclude 7 per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.