

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The operating environment in 2017 will remain challenging as the impact of ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and Ukraine continue to resonate throughout Europe.

Large numbers of people continue to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea in search of safety and protection in Europe. Between January and June 2016, 38 countries in Europe had received nearly 625,000 asylum applications, a 22 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2015, with applicants originating mainly from Syria (216,900), Afghanistan (128,000) and Iraq (94,300). Against this background, significant challenges persist in providing protection and securing solutions for people of concern to UNHCR in the region, including increasing restrictions on access to territory; a lack of appropriate reception conditions, particularly for people with specific needs, including unaccompanied and separated children; and inadequate asylum procedures. It is against this background that the European Commission announced a series of proposals in May, June and July 2016 aimed at amending the current Common European Asylum System (CEAS), including the reform of FRONTEX and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).





Europe

Syrian refugees drink tea and check their phones next to their tents inside a warehouse at the Vasilika camp, northern Greece, which opened in May 2016.

UNHCR will continue to strengthen its cooperation with governments, European Union (EU) institutions and agencies, civil society and affected communities in order to address these challenges and will encourage reforms of the CEAS based on the lessons learned during the refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016.

Turkey remains host to the largest number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate worldwide, with more than 2.7 million Syrian refugees as of October 2016. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine continues to cause large-scale displacement, with more than 1.7 million people internally displaced, according to Government registration figures. Freedom of movement and access to affected populations continues to be of concern to the Office. Some 1.4 million Ukrainians have sought asylum or other forms of legal stay in neighbouring countries since the conflict began, the majority in the Russian Federation.

MAJOR SITUATIONS

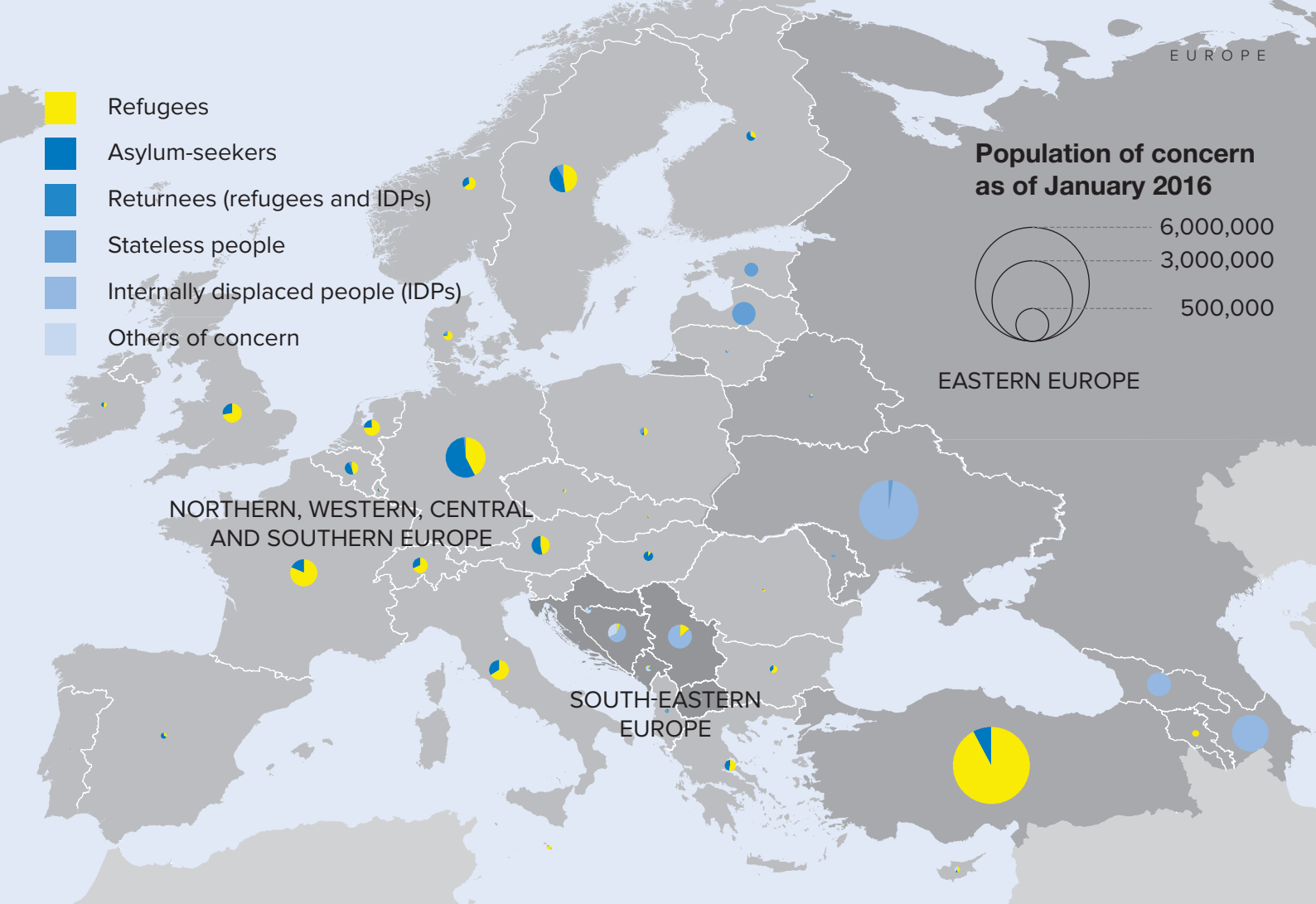
Europe refugee situation

While the number of arrivals to **Greece** so far in 2016 is lower than for the same period in 2015, the number of people arriving in **Italy** remains consistent with that of 2015. The number of applications for asylum in the region increased in 2016, with **Germany** receiving by far the most applications. There are still people of concern, who see themselves as being in transit, in countries in the Western Balkans. The majority are concentrated in **Serbia** where more than 6,000 asylum seekers and migrants are accommodated in various type of government facilities across the country.

UNHCR's regional strategy for 2017 focuses on protecting and assisting a more stabilized population and remains in line with the Refugee and Migration Response Plan and the Refugee Coordination Model (see *Glossary*). UNHCR will continue to promote a coordinated response in addressing the humanitarian and protection needs of people of concern, including by supporting the efforts of governments to meet their obligations under international and regional law.

In Greece, the Office will continue to focus on strengthening reception conditions and some site management, supporting temporary accommodation facilities, identifying and assisting people with specific needs, as well as providing humanitarian assistance. In particular, efforts are underway to ensure that people with specific needs, including unaccompanied and separated children, survivors of SGBV and people with mental and physical disabilities, are referred to appropriate services. UNHCR will also continue to support the Greek Asylum Service to ensure people of concern are able to register their intent to seek asylum, and have access to timely, fair, and efficient asylum proceedings, irrespective of their nationality.

As **Turkey** transits from a refugee emergency to a protracted situation, UNHCR will increase its support to the improvement of the living conditions of all people of concern. As over 90% of the refugees live outside of the camps, UNHCR will continue focusing on supporting the most vulnerable urban refugees with a three-pillar strategy comprising education, livelihoods and access to social welfare.



Conflict in Ukraine

UNHCR will continue to closely monitor and report on the protection situation of some 1.7 million registered IDPs in Ukraine, as well as those who have sought asylum or other forms of legal stay in neighbouring countries. The Office will maintain its lead in coordinating shelter and NFI material assistance to IDPs, informed by protection needs, and keep up its advocacy in favour of ensuring freedom of movement across the line of contact and access to social assistance for IDPs.

UNHCR will continue to monitor the situation of Ukrainian refugees in neighbouring countries and may pursue limited assistance when and if required.

REGIONAL STRATEGY

UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe covers 46 countries and works with a range of regional organizations, including the European Union and its agencies, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. In 2017, UNHCR will continue to support governments in maintaining protection regimes which are compliant with international standards, advocating for the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless people while maintaining a robust emergency response. The response will be focused around providing technical and functional support to government authorities, and builds capacity, including providing life-saving assistance.

Safeguarding asylum space and providing appropriate reception conditions

UNHCR will continue to focus on safeguarding asylum space and ensuring access to territory and acceptable reception conditions. The Office will support government authorities to conduct registration, in order to ensure assistance and referrals to relevant services to address the specific needs of people of concern.

UNHCR will reinforce advocacy efforts related to enhancing the use of Dublin III family reunion and discretionary clauses. UNHCR will focus on strengthening registration procedures, improving reception conditions, providing better counselling, as well as supporting government efforts to facilitate integration, with a view to encouraging people of concern to apply for asylum in the first country of arrival, rather than undertaking potentially dangerous secondary movements frequently facilitated by smuggling groups. Offices will also reinforce efforts related to Dublin III discretionary and family reunification clauses. UNHCR will provide technical expertise and training, and coordinate with authorities and partners, in order to reduce SGBV and protection risks in reception centres and to ensure effective protection for unaccompanied and separated children. In Italy, UNHCR will continue supporting the Government to strengthen emergency preparedness in the event of a larger influx.

In the Balkans, UNHCR will continue to monitor the situation to prevent people of concern from being exposed to abuse and violence at the hands of smugglers and criminal organizations as they move irregularly in Central Europe, and continue advocating for access to asylum and standardized registration processes,

while working with governments to build reception capacity.

The Office will support ongoing government efforts across the region to strengthen asylum systems and ensure access to territory and asylum procedures, including non-penalization for irregular entry to a country; enhanced quality and efficiency of procedures, with particular focus on asylum claims by children; and facilitating integration.

Building and maintaining fair and effective asylum and protection systems

UNHCR will engage in advocacy with the EU institutions regarding the European Commission's proposal for a reform of the CEAS, in line with its vision for a truly common and harmonized regional asylum system. This system should ensure effective, fair and harmonized identification, registration, screening, adequate reception and effective possibilities for integration in Member States under fair responsibility sharing mechanisms which respect the principles of the best interest of the child and family unity.

The Office will continue protection monitoring in 2017 and the child and family support hubs ("blue dot") will be expanded in Italy and Greece to ensure effective protection and referrals of vulnerable individuals, in particular unaccompanied and separated children, SGBV survivors and people with disabilities. In addition, communication with communities will be strengthened through targeted outreach activities. UNHCR's commitment to child protection will also be strengthened in response to the significant number of unaccompanied and separated children and to ensure that the principle of the

best interest of the child is applied across the region.

Given the large influx of asylum-seekers has placed existing systems under strain and created backlogs in asylum systems throughout the region, UNHCR will increase its support to national authorities in the management of quality asylum systems.

In the Northern Europe subregion, UNHCR's priorities will remain on ensuring access to territory and asylum procedures including non-penalization for irregular entry; enhanced quality and efficiency of asylum procedures with particular focus on child asylum claims; facilitation of integration, and ending statelessness. Strategic litigation and public information will be strengthened to prevent a further tightening of law and policy.

UNHCR will support the second phase of the Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus (QIEE) in 2015-2017 to strengthen the quality of asylum systems including RSD procedures. A regional protection support hub located in Tbilisi, Georgia will provide expertise and advice on a range of protection issues, including RSD and resettlement to all the countries in the subregion.

A key priority for UNHCR in the Western Balkans region over the last three years has been to assist States build fair and efficient asylum systems, not just through the enactment of laws or other normative frameworks to satisfy EU-enlargement or visa liberalization benchmarks, but in practice. This will remain a key priority in and beyond 2017. The large scale movement of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in 2015 revealed significant weaknesses and gaps in the capacity of affected States to manage basic processes. States in

the Western Balkans were focused on a single objective; to facilitate the quick transit of people to neighbouring countries. The few asylum-seekers who remain in these countries experience every day the lack of effective asylum systems. Without the renewed and dedicated support of key stakeholders in the EU, UNHCR alone with its partners will not be able to convince these States to take seriously their obligations to build asylum systems, and the region will remain a transit spot where trafficking activities flourish.

Securing durable solutions

UNHCR will continue to advocate for predictable pathways for admission to Europe. As of August 2016, 25 European countries had made over 110,200 places available for resettlement and other pathways for the admission of Syrian refugees out of a total of approximately 221,800 places pledged globally (more details on Resettlement and Other Admission Pathways for Syrian Refugees are available at <http://www.unhcr.org/573dc82d4.html>). Negotiations to adopt standard operating procedures for the "Voluntary humanitarian admission scheme" from Turkey for people displaced by the Syrian conflict are ongoing. The European Commission launched an Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals which could form the basis for improved integration outcomes for people of concern.

Given the growing number of people in need of resettlement globally, increased opportunities for resettlement and other pathways for admission to Europe are urgently needed. Despite the adoption of the "Conclusions on resettlement" by the Council of the European Union in July 2015 for more than 22,500 individuals, the European Union-Turkey Statement

led to some countries initially dedicating their quotas to Syrians in Turkey. The implementation of relocations has been disappointing, with just 4 per cent of the 160,000 available places from Greece and Italy filled by October 2016.

UNHCR will therefore continue to advocate for predictable and credible pathways of admission to Europe that are responsive to all refugee populations, and will seek to engage with civil society and the private sector, including businesses, to explore ways of facilitating integration.

UNHCR will support arrangements towards enhancing family reunification, as it facilitates integration and provides an effective possibility for women and children to have safe access to protection in Europe. UNHCR will continue advocating for EU Member States to extend eligibility for family reunification needs beyond spouses and minor unmarried children as well as for refugees and beneficiaries of other forms of protection (such as subsidiary protection) to enjoy equal rights of family reunification.

The Office will continue working to responsibly disengage from providing direct assistance to people displaced in South-Eastern Europe by the conflicts in the Balkans during the 1990s. UNHCR is supporting governments in the region to assume full responsibility for securing durable solutions for those in need beyond 2017, and will continue to engage strategically at a policy level regionally and nationally. UNHCR will work to mobilize development actors and potential donors in situations where governments and institutions are likely to require support after 2017.

Preventing and resolving statelessness

With some 600,000 stateless people estimated to be living in Europe, and a small but growing number of stateless asylum-seekers, UNHCR will continue its efforts to eradicate statelessness in line with the #IBelong campaign (see the chapter on *Safeguarding fundamental human rights*). UNHCR will also support an increasing number of governments in Europe to establish and strengthen procedures to adequately identify and protect stateless people by providing technical support, and promoting good practices. Ongoing advocacy and engagement with governments, local authorities, civil society and affected communities in South-Eastern Europe has contributed to a gradual reduction in the number of people at risk of statelessness and an improved understanding of the existing obstacles, notably in relation to civil registration.

UNHCR will further support the European Network on Statelessness on its initiatives throughout the continent, notably its work on stateless people in detention and its #StatelessKids campaign, focusing on the remaining gaps in law and practice to adequately address statelessness among children. Building on the EU's first ever Council Conclusions on statelessness, adopted in December 2015, UNHCR will continue to advocate for the engagement of the EU in addressing statelessness, notably through the European Migration Network.

Strengthening UNHCR's external relations and mobilizing support for the work of the Office worldwide and for people of concern

A central feature of UNHCR's response to the Mediterranean emergency situation is the strengthening of partnerships with multiple stakeholders, including governments, regional institutions, United Nations agencies, civil society and NGOs. The Office, working together with partners and affected States, focuses on raising awareness of the situation of people in need of international protection arriving in Europe, particularly those with specific needs. This requires increased advocacy in calling for a coordinated and comprehensive response in Europe to address the situation, and in urging an approach based on solidarity and responsibility-sharing among States.

CONSTRAINTS

Despite the diverse political traditions and differing asylum systems in European countries, UNHCR is concerned by increasing xenophobic public debates in several countries across the region which have also contributed to a challenging working environment. The CEAS, along with European Union Member States, have failed to demonstrate sufficient solidarity

and responsibility-sharing in line with their international obligations, and have failed to respond to the increased number of people arriving at Europe's southern borders.

The response of many countries does not sufficiently reflect the gravity of the situation, with mechanisms to support frontline reception countries slow to materialize and the introduction of increasingly restrictive measures by several countries, including on family reunification. UNHCR is particularly concerned about the reliance on national security concerns, in some Eastern European countries, as grounds to reject asylum applications and limit access to territory and asylum procedures; the functioning of asylum systems being constrained by political priorities and sensitivities; and limited integration opportunities.

In addition to these, restrictions to access asylum, reliance on humanitarian rather than refugee status, non-protection sensitive border management practices, and the detention of asylum-seekers, including asylum-seeking children, are a few of the other constraints encountered in the region.

Despite improvements in Ukraine, limitations on freedom of movement and restrictions on access will continue to hamper the work of humanitarian organizations. ■

Financial information

The 2016 original budget approved by the Executive Committee in October 2015 was \$516.9 million, with the current budget reaching \$875.2 million by 30 June 2016, an increase of approximately \$358.3 million, or 69 per cent. This is inclusive of the supplementary budget of \$344.0 million, which was established to address unforeseen needs associated with the crisis in Europe and of internal transfers for cost-shared activities, for a total of \$14.3 million.

The 2017 budget is \$891.7 million, around \$16.4 million, or 2 per cent, more than the 2016 current budget. At the subregional level, the 2017 proposed budget for Eastern Europe is \$496 million, which is \$77.8 million, or 19 per cent, more than the 2016 current budget. Eastern Europe is the subregion that has seen the largest budget increase since 2011, from \$80.3

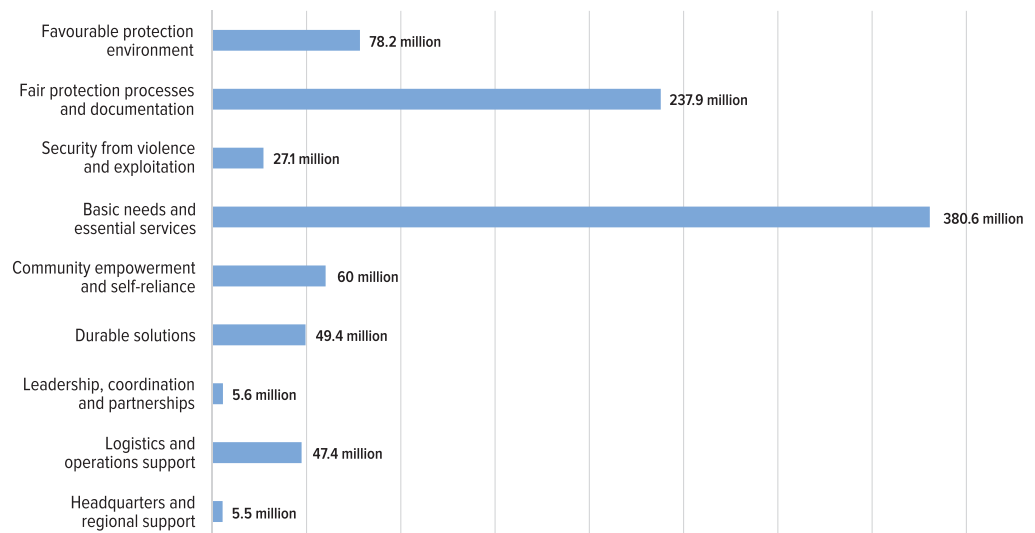
million to its current level, due to the impact of the Syria, Iraq and Ukraine situations. For South-Eastern Europe, the budget is \$60.9 million. Taking into consideration the latest developments in the region and a reduction in the number of arrivals since March 2016, the estimated requirements for 2017 represent a decrease of \$8 million, or nearly 12 per cent, compared to 2016. A progressive downsizing of UNHCR's engagement with the protracted refugee and IDP caseloads in the Western Balkans will continue.

The requirements for Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe in 2017 total \$334.8 million, of which 73 per cent (\$245.9 million) is allocated to Greece. When compared to the 2016 current budget, the estimated requirements for the Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe subregion for 2017 have been reduced by

14 per cent. In view of the scale and complexity of the influx, the UNHCR operation in Greece, previously under the purview of the Regional Office in Rome, started being managed independently.

As the situation remains difficult to predict, UNHCR has made efforts to keep requirements to a minimum in 2017, while taking into account the ongoing requirements of its operations in Greece. In 2017, the objectives with the highest budgetary allocations will be the provision of sufficient basic and domestic items (\$250.4 million), the continued improvement of reception conditions (\$175.6 million) and the establishment of adequate shelter and infrastructure (\$56.2 million). A lack of funding would have a negative impact on these objectives which not only aim to provide assistance but are also part of integration efforts led by UNHCR and partners in affected countries.

Europe 2017 budget by rights group | USD millions



BUDGETS FOR EUROPE | USD

Operation	2016 Current budget (as of 30 June 2016)	2017					Total
		Pillar 1 Refugee programme	Pillar 2 Stateless programme	Pillar 3 Reintegration projects	Pillar 4 IDP projects		
EASTERN EUROPE							
Belarus	2,358,913	1,298,975	42,265	0	0	1,341,240	
Georgia Regional Office ¹	22,083,342	11,516,345	791,212	0	4,320,429	16,627,987	
Russian Federation	5,524,867	5,227,423	556,359	0	0	5,783,781	
Turkey	345,923,226	434,601,089	2,790	0	0	434,603,879	
Ukraine Regional Office	42,340,424	6,757,353	664,641	0	30,231,018	37,653,012	
Subtotal	418,230,773	459,401,185	2,057,267	0	34,551,447	496,009,900	
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE							
Bosnia and Herzegovina Regional Office ²	68,854,689	35,978,782	3,291,115	3,787,869	17,820,348	60,878,115	
Subtotal	68,854,689	35,978,782	3,291,115	3,787,869	17,820,348	60,878,115	
NORTHERN, WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE							
Belgium Regional Office ³	18,913,501	16,811,110	858,969	0	0	17,670,079	
Greece	286,762,611	245,838,409	27,856	0	0	245,866,265	
Hungary Regional Office ⁴	19,989,143	16,373,410	562,645	772,510	0	17,708,565	
Italy Regional Office ⁵	18,217,228	20,043,039	215,021	0	0	20,258,060	
Sweden Regional Office ⁶	5,031,627	3,918,624	650,851	0	0	4,569,475	
Regional activities	39,242,935	28,274,389	428,504	0	0	28,702,893	
Subtotal	388,157,044	331,258,980	2,743,846	772,510	0	334,775,337	
Total	875,242,505	826,638,948	8,092,228	4,560,380	52,371,795	891,663,351	

¹ Armenia and Azerbaijan are reported under Georgia Regional Office as from 2016

² As from 2015, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia (including Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999))) and Montenegro are reported under the Bosnia and Herzegovina Regional Office

³ Includes activities in Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Liaison Office in Switzerland and the United Kingdom

⁴ includes activities in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and as from 2016 also includes Moldova

⁵ Includes activities in Albania, Cyprus, Malta and Spain

⁶ Includes activities in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Norway

Budgets for Europe 2008-2017 | USD millions

