

Europe

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Europe is likely to remain a destination for refugees fleeing conflict and persecution in 2018, from situations as far afield as Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), as well as from crises within Europe, such as that in Ukraine.

From January to August 2017, European countries received some 396,700 asylum applications—down 56 per cent compared to the same period in 2016—with applicants originating mainly from Syria (58,200), Afghanistan (27,800), Nigeria (26,200) and Iraq (25,600). Turkey remains host to the world's largest refugee population, with 3.4 million refugees and asylum-seekers, the vast majority of whom (3.15 million) originate from Syria.

The lack of durable solutions—including limited integration prospects in many first countries of asylum and a limited number of legal pathways—leaves many with few choices but to attempt migration to Europe, and refugees and migrants are likely to continue to risk their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea in search of safety.

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A Somali chef (right) works together with his Greek colleague in the kitchen of a restaurant participating in the 2017 Refugee Food Festival in Athens, Greece.

During the first three quarters of 2017, over 2,600 refugees and migrants died or went missing in the Mediterranean.

Refugees and migrants generally enter Europe along one of three routes. Two go through the Eastern and Western Mediterranean. The third, the central Mediterranean route, from North Africa to Italy, is currently the most high-profile and dangerous. During the first three quarters of 2017, at least 2,600 refugees and migrants died or went missing in the Mediterranean, 94 per cent of whom were trying to cross from Libya to Italy.

Despite the decrease in arrivals, refugees and migrants continue to put themselves at grave risk during their journeys to Europe and while attempting to move onwards throughout the continent. Given the factors compelling people to use that migration route, there is every reason to believe that in 2018 the route will remain active, and that UNHCR and its partners will need to work with States to continue providing international protection and assistance.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine continues to cause large-scale displacement, with more than 1.6 million IDPs, according to Government registration figures. Freedom of movement, lack of prospects for integration and restricted access to affected populations in non-government controlled areas will remain key concerns in 2018. The Office will also continue to monitor and provide support to the 1.4 million Ukrainians who have sought asylum or other forms of legal stay in neighbouring countries since the conflict began in 2014.

Significant challenges will persist to provide protection and secure solutions for people of concern to UNHCR in Europe, particularly in relation to the increasing restrictions being placed on their access to territory; a lack of appropriate reception conditions, particularly for people with specific needs, including unaccompanied

and separated children; inadequate asylum procedures and insufficient integration support. In 2018, UNHCR will continue to strengthen its cooperation with governments, European Union institutions, regional organizations and agencies, as well as civil society and affected communities, in order to address these challenges.

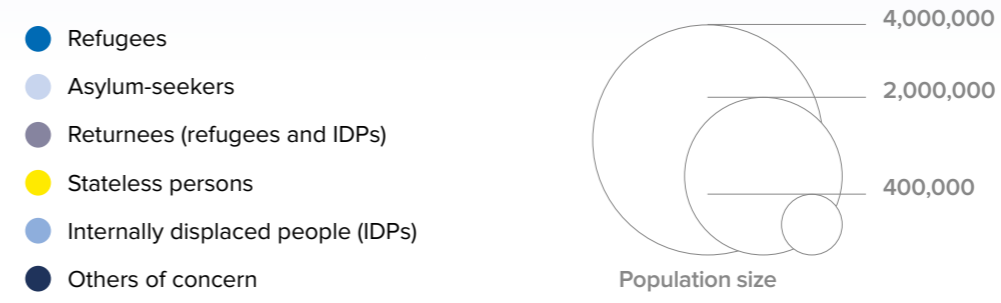
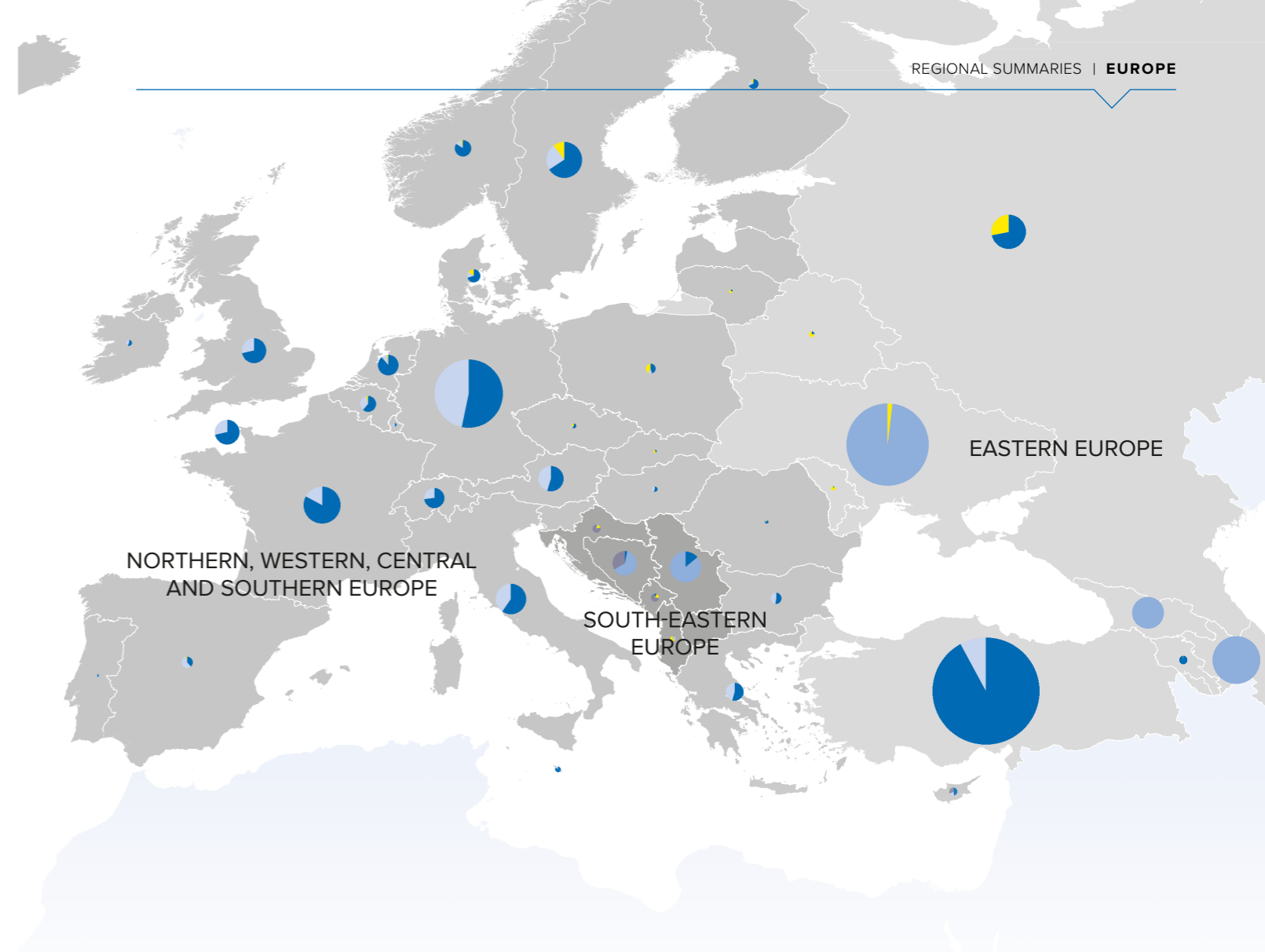
MAJOR SITUATIONS

Europe refugee situation

The number of refugees and migrants entering Europe by sea between January and August 2017 decreased by 55 per cent compared to the same period in 2016. The main reason for the overall drop in new arrivals was the significant decrease in numbers crossing from Turkey to Greece by sea since March 2016 and, more recently, the fall in numbers crossing the sea to Italy.

In Italy, UNHCR is strengthening its operational response through community-based (see *Glossary*) protection, including the protection of unaccompanied and separated children as well as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV, see *Glossary*) prevention and response. The Office will continue supporting authorities in the identification and referral of people with specific needs and monitoring reception conditions.

The year saw a significant increase in arrivals to Spain, with nearly double the number of arrivals for the same period in 2016. The majority were of West African, Syrian and Moroccan origin. In Ceuta and Melilla more specifically, where the reception conditions are particularly concerning, UNHCR will continue working with authorities in 2018 to support access



to asylum, the identification of those with specific needs and improvement of reception conditions.

UNHCR estimates that over 43,000 asylum-seekers and refugees arrived in Greece since January 2015, however the number of new arrivals has been relatively stable since April 2016 – a trend that is expected to continue into 2018. With Greek authorities progressively

increasing their presence in the registration and identification centres on the Aegean Islands, UNHCR will continue to reduce its operational engagement.

Challenges remain, nonetheless, in terms of reception. UNHCR will continue to advocate transfers to the mainland and expects to secure some 22,000 places for asylum-seekers and refugees in mainland Greece by the end of 2017.

This is related to its shift away from providing support to sites on the Greek islands and in line with its urban-centered approach. The organization reached approximately 36,000 people through its partners in 2017 and will continue to provide cash assistance in 2018. UNHCR's focus in Greece in 2018 will be on the development of national asylum and reception systems, protection monitoring and interventions, with a particular focus on those with specific needs, as well as supporting the creation of conditions for self-reliance and potential for integration of refugees in Greece.

In Central Europe, mixed movements continue, albeit at a slower pace compared to previous years. Since most countries have increased the legal and physical restrictions on refugees and migrants, further limiting their access to territory, many resort to unsafe smuggling routes, including by seeking new corridors via land and sea. This situation is expected to continue into 2018. Collective expulsions continue to be reported through the region. UNHCR will continue its efforts to work with key stakeholders—including governments, partners and civil society—to strengthen asylum systems and provide protection to

people with specific needs, including unaccompanied or separated children, and survivors of SGBV.

In Northern and Western Europe, governments have made significant investment in integration programmes, social integration and the inclusion of refugees. UNHCR will continue promoting and training government personnel in carrying out participatory and community-based assessments to ensure refugees' particular vulnerabilities are taken into account, to address any barriers to their integration. In addition, UNHCR will continue strengthening the cooperation with NGOs and civil society, as well as with corporate actors, to support labour integration projects.

The Office remains concerned about the increasing hurdles to family re-unification that are being introduced in some countries in response to increasing refugee arrivals. In 2018, UNHCR will engage with governments to reduce practical and procedural requirements for family reunification and to promote alignment of national laws to international and European standards.

In Turkey, the Government provides protection and assistance to all people of concern, 90 per cent of whom live in urban settings. UNHCR will continue to support the Government to provide essential services. UNHCR also promotes the adoption of national protection-sensitive border management tools, improving access to legal remedies and assistance, and advocating access to people of concern in closed centres. While UNHCR's

strategy focuses on urban refugees, it will continue to assist the Government in addressing the needs of refugees in camps, when needed.

Conflict in Ukraine

As the conflict enters its fourth year, UNHCR will continue to monitor and report on the protection situation of those displaced within and outside Ukraine. This will include approximately 1.6 million IDPs in Ukraine and more than 1.4 million Ukrainians who have applied for asylum and other forms of legal stay, mainly in neighbouring countries. UNHCR will continue to advocate for IDPs to have full access to their pensions and social benefits, as well as for vulnerable IDPs to have access to social housing. An important element of its work will be to facilitate safe crossing of the line of contact. Life-saving humanitarian assistance will remain a priority in the vicinity of the contact line and in the non-government-controlled areas. UNHCR will continue to build its strategic partnerships with government and non-government actors, and use established inter-agency coordination mechanisms to improve protection of the interventions for people with vulnerabilities.



Abdul* and his daughter speak with Serbian authorities.

One family's journey to Europe

Abdul* was a renowned artist in Kabul. In spring 2016, after his work attracted threats from many sides, Abdul, his wife and two small daughters decided to leave. Relying on smugglers to cross borders, they crossed into Iran and then Turkey. There, smugglers promised them an easy journey through Bulgaria but it was to be one of the hardest parts of the journey. The smuggler started to increase his demands for more money, threatening Abdul and his family if they did not comply and pay him \$2,000. "They told me that they would take my daughters and we'd never see them again if we fail to pay," Abdul recounts while his wife, sitting next to him, breaks down in tears. "I was terrified, beside myself with worry and grief! I hid my tears, so that the children would not realize that something was wrong. And I kept telling myself they should see only determination and courage in their parents."

"The smugglers are ruthless, they size you up and decide on the spot how much they will charge you." After five nights trying to cross the border irregularly, Abdul's family and 15 other refugees crossed into Serbia. Traumatized by the journey thus far, their youngest child begged them to stop. So they registered with Serbian authorities and have been accommodated and assisted in a reception facility in Serbia since.

*Name changed to protect the individual's identity

REGIONAL STRATEGY

In 2018, UNHCR will continue to support governments in maintaining protection regimes that are compliant with international standards by advocating the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons. UNHCR will also continue to provide protection support to European states, including in reception management, the identification of people with specific needs, the development of referral pathways, the prevention and response to SGBV, and provision of technical support to national child protection systems.

Safeguarding asylum space and providing appropriate reception conditions

Establishing adequate reception conditions, in particular for vulnerable people, remains a challenge in a number of countries in Europe. UNHCR will continue to assist States in this regard, in addition to ensuring access to information and asylum procedures, referral to appropriate services, and that all processes are based on consultation with people of concern.

UNHCR has worked with partners and national authorities to establish protection monitoring mechanisms at border areas across Europe and will continue to work with them to ensure protection-sensitive border management.

The Office will continue to promote compliance with internationally-accepted asylum standards and to work with States on solutions, while looking to address some of the drivers behind onward movement using an evidence-based and participatory approach. Some such drivers

relate to reception conditions, the granting of protection, access to integration and to family reunification. Even where processes are in place, practical obstacles persist, and in the case of family reunions have the effect of hampering the reunification.

Building and maintaining fair and effective asylum and protection systems

UNHCR will continue to support States in managing protection-centred asylum systems, including access to asylum procedures, the provision of information on procedures and rights, as well as the provision of legal aid and interpretation support. UNHCR will promote the use of fair and efficient accelerated procedures to ensure a more timely access to international protection for those who need it, and to facilitate return for those who do not.

An effective implementation of the Dublin Regulation (see *Glossary*) has the potential to foster solidarity between EU States as well as with applicants, including in reuniting family members. Similar efforts for building and strengthening asylum and protection systems in non-EU member States will continue in 2018 through advocacy and capacity-building support, including the Asylum Systems Quality Initiative for Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

UNHCR will also continue to engage in advocacy with relevant EU institutions regarding the reform of its rules on asylum (the Common European Asylum System). In line with its recommendations in the “Better protecting refugees in the EU and globally” document, the Office will continue promoting a protection-oriented reform that will ensure preparedness in the event

of future large-scale arrivals, foster a well-managed common EU asylum system, and integrate refugees. In particular, it is key that the reform guarantees the orderly processing of arrivals, prioritization of family reunion, provision of fair and efficient procedures for asylum determination, fair responsibility sharing, and also incentivizes compliance by both applicants and States.

In line with its commitment to the framework, accountability to affected populations, UNHCR will continue to ensure that refugee participation and inclusion is prioritized in protection programme planning and implementation. The organization will work with States and child protection actors to take concrete action to protect refugee and migrant children across Europe, with a focus on unaccompanied and separated children, as reflected in the papers “The way forward: to strengthened policies and practices for unaccompanied and separated children in Europe” and the “Call to action”.

UNHCR will prioritize the prevention of and response to SGBV, particularly by establishing minimum reception standards and effective mechanisms for prevention of this violence.

Securing durable solutions

UNHCR will maintain its advocacy for predictable and credible pathways for admission to Europe, with particular reference to the commitments made by European states for the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (see *Glossary*). As of September 2017, 25 European countries had made approximately 120,600 places available for resettlement or other forms of admission for Syrian refugees. Under the Council of

the European Union conclusions of July 2015, 27 Member States, together with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, voluntarily pledged more than 22,500 places for resettlement over two years. As of September 2017, approximately 17,300 people were resettled under this scheme. UNHCR will continue to advocate for all participating states to fulfil their commitments as an important token of European solidarity.

Negotiations will continue regarding the European Commission proposal for a European Union-wide resettlement framework. UNHCR will maintain engagement with all relevant stakeholders to contribute to the legislative process. It will also continue to participate in negotiations related to the establishment of a European Union voluntary humanitarian admission scheme with Turkey.

Resettlement is a vital tool for protecting refugees in Eastern Europe. In light of higher levels of displacement in the subregion and bearing in mind the displacement from Syria, UNHCR sees an ongoing need to maintain the resettlement programmes. An estimated 2,000 people in Eastern Europe are in need of help. UNHCR will continue to advocate and support expanded and facilitated access to family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection. Greater family reunification would provide an additional safe pathway to Europe and reduce reliance on the use of smugglers. UNHCR will continue to campaign for the removal of legal and practical obstacles to family reunification, such as limits on the eligibility of spouses and unmarried children under 18 years of age; short application time limits; a lack of information and assistance

when navigating complex administrative procedures; difficulties in accessing travel documents; and prohibitive travel costs.

Preventing and resolving statelessness

UNHCR will continue to support governments, lawmakers and civil society throughout Europe in their efforts to find solutions for the approximately 600,000 stateless persons in the region, in line with the objective of the #IBelong Campaign. Efforts include the adoption and implementation of laws that prevent statelessness at birth or later in life; and of procedures that give access to civil registration and documentation, allowing the confirmation of citizenship to those

entitled to it, notably in Southeast Europe. Procedures to identify and protect stateless persons are being developed and strengthened throughout Europe, notably in relation to the adequate recording of statelessness among refugees and migrants arriving in Europe. UNHCR seeks to engage the different EU institutions that can play a role in this regard, notably EASO and Frontex. Cooperation with the OSCE, initiated with the publication of the joint UNHCR-OSCE “Handbook on statelessness in the OSCE area: international standards and good practices” will continue throughout the region, notably in Southeast and Eastern Europe. UNHCR’s fruitful collaboration with the European Network on Statelessness will continue in 2018 in a number of thematic areas, regionally and nationally.



French village opens its chateau as home for refugees

“Hatred is noisy”, says Mayor Gerard Dubois, “solidarity is quiet, but inspiring and effective. It’s difficult to accept that people you know do not hold the same values. But I have also discovered so much solidarity.”

Dubois believes that initial fears stemmed from the fact that locals did not know the new arrivals. Any apprehension, he says, disappeared once they had met them. “Meeting and getting to know each other changes everything. It’s as simple as that. I don’t call them refugees, but guests.”

In 2015, Pessat-Villeneuve, which has a population of 550, opened the doors of its chateau as a reception and guidance centre for refugees from Calais and Paris. Since then, it has hosted 136 refugees.

Strengthening external relations in the region

Increasing public awareness of efforts across Europe from numerous and diverse actors to welcome refugees, as well as contributions made by refugees themselves, are important to combat negative discourse against refugees and asylum-seekers and to demonstrate the

positive contribution they make to society. This includes ensuring awareness through communications and other external opportunities showcasing the spirit of solidarity in Europe towards those forced to flee their homes as well as efforts by refugees to contribute and integrate in their new communities. Principles of solidarity and responsibility-sharing among States will continue to be promoted.

CONSTRAINTS

Despite the existence of a shared legal framework and common standards among some States, the official treatment of refugees and migrants varies widely throughout Europe. UNHCR has noted that the standards and practices of some EU Member States are at variance with international law. These divergences contribute to irregular onward movement and allow criminal smuggling networks to persist.

European States are increasingly focused on encouraging and supporting protection solutions outside of Europe, at times at the expense of granting effective protection themselves. This practice is contrary to the commitments made at the summits in New York in September 2016. Restricting access to protection space within the EU risks undermining the message of solidarity to low- and middle-income countries currently hosting the majority of refugees, which is at the core of the New York Declaration.

European States frequently have fundamentally different views regarding solidarity and responsibility-sharing for asylum-seekers and refugees. Some explicitly state their reluctance to welcome asylum-seekers on their territory, at times responding with discriminatory sentiment. These differences hamper efforts to support States facing large numbers of arrivals, and the wider goal of reforming EU rules on asylum.

In Eastern Europe, security concerns coupled with economic hardship continue to dominate asylum policy and national asylum systems lack the capacity to ensure effective protection for the most vulnerable.

In south-eastern Europe, refugees and migrants are often determined to proceed onward and consider their stay only temporary. The reasons for this vary from a real or perceived impression of their experiences in the country, the assistance offered, and their own preferences to seek asylum in specific destinations. This approach reinforces the inclination of the States to consider themselves as transit countries.

UNHCR remains concerned by restrictive legislation introduced in several countries within the European Union in relation to border controls, asylum procedures and family reunification. In response, the organization has increased protection monitoring and intervention, and will continue in 2018 to advocate safe access to territory and asylum procedures while reinforcing efforts to facilitate integration and find other durable solutions.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Europe is the region with the greatest percentage budget growth, with an increase of \$47.9 million or 6 per cent compared to 2017, mostly due to the continued large-scale movements across the Mediterranean Sea. Within the region, the proposed budget for Eastern Europe represents an increase of \$62.5 million, or almost 15 per cent in comparison to the 2017 current budget, mainly due to the growth of the refugee programme in Turkey as a result of the Syria Crisis. The requirements for Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe in 2018 amount to some \$339 million,

of which \$238.6 million, or 70 per cent, is allocated to Greece, remaining more or less stable compared to 2017.

UNHCR expects to remain engaged in providing assistance and protection to refugees in 2018, particularly in relation to those arriving in Greece and Italy. With respect to UNHCR's engagement with the protracted refugee and IDP populations in the Western Balkans, a progressive scaling down is expected to continue. The main activities in 2018 will focus on advocacy and assistance to the governments in the subregion to improve asylum systems and strengthen the protection regime.

EUROPE 2018 BUDGET BY RIGHTS GROUP | USD millions



BUDGETS FOR EUROPE | USD

OPERATION	2017 Current budget (as of 30 June 2017)	2018				TOTAL	2019 Proposed budget
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programmes	PILLAR 2 Stateless programmes	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects		
EASTERN EUROPE							
Belarus	1,343,027	1,595,197	43,000	-	-	1,638,197	1,598,699
Georgia Regional Office ¹	16,743,893	11,149,900	505,777	-	4,972,920	16,628,598	15,909,806
Russian Federation	5,883,781	5,255,250	970,894	-	-	6,226,145	6,462,417
Turkey	367,991,775	436,573,729	2,790	-	-	436,576,519	437,401,598
Ukraine	37,653,012	6,029,065	816,550	-	24,240,896	31,086,511	28,282,353
SUBTOTAL	429,615,487	460,603,141	2,339,011	-	29,213,817	492,155,969	489,654,873
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE							
Bosnia and Herzegovina Regional Office ²	61,208,117	39,793,906	5,372,896	-	-	45,166,802	39,690,737
SUBTOTAL	61,208,117	39,793,906	5,372,896	-	-	45,166,802	39,690,737
NORTHERN, WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE							
Belgium Regional Office ³	17,846,129	17,739,230	1,274,599	-	-	19,013,829	18,417,677
Greece	245,866,265	238,484,306	86,813	-	-	238,571,119	167,086,596
Hungary Regional Office ⁴	17,612,569	14,888,729	522,964	162,653	-	15,574,346	14,468,017
Italy Regional Office ⁵	31,893,246	29,252,050	193,385	-	-	29,445,436	28,564,893
Sweden Regional Office ⁶	4,631,118	4,778,610	487,687	-	-	5,266,297	5,326,293
Regional activities	19,728,240	30,616,634	480,000	-	-	31,096,634	31,096,634
SUBTOTAL	337,577,567	335,759,559	3,045,449	162,653	-	338,967,661	264,960,110
TOTAL	828,401,171	836,156,606	10,757,356	162,653	29,213,817	876,290,432	794,305,720

¹ Includes activities in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

² Includes activities in Albania, Macedonia, Serbia (and Kosovo; Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)) and Montenegro.

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, Czechia, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

⁵ Includes activities in Cyprus, Malta and Spain.

⁶ Includes activities in Latvia and Lithuania.

BUDGETS FOR EUROPE 2010-2019 | USD

