



Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Hungary
Poland
Romania
Slovak Republic
Slovenia

**A social worker welcomes a
refugee in the Bicske
Integration Centre, near
Budapest, Hungary.**

Central Europe



| OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- UNHCR worked to improve the quality of national asylum procedures through the Further Developing Quality (FDQ) project, conducted with the cooperation of five countries in the subregion. There was progress towards making Quality Assurance Units an integral part of government bodies working on asylum.
- The implementation of new and existing border-monitoring agreements allowed UNHCR to help build border guards' capacity to administer asylum procedures. In a number of instances this collaboration prevented *refoulement*.
- More than 750 people, representing a variety of government counterparts and NGO partners, participated in UNHCR-led training in the subregion. Topics covered protection at borders, the interviewing of children and responses to sexual and gender-based violence. Among the participants were some 140 border guards or monitors.
- The finalization of an integration evaluation tool is expected to improve monitoring and assist evidence-based advocacy.



Working environment

In 2010, refugees in the subregion felt the impact of the global economic downturn, particularly because of the decline in job openings and resistance to integration in the countries of asylum. However, UNHCR enjoyed good relations with asylum authorities and developed sustainable and strategic partnerships with civil society. This helped the pursuit of advocacy efforts to address negative public attitudes towards people of concern, as well as interventions with regard to border management, restrictive legislation and practice, reception standards, integration and statelessness.

There was a decline in the number of asylum applications in Central Europe to 12,100: 37 per cent less than in the previous year. At the same time, the number of people receiving international protection in the subregion fell by more than 60 per cent compared to 2009. This was mainly due to a sharp drop in the number of people granted a complementary form of protection.

Achievements and impact

Ensuring fair and efficient asylum procedures

The FDQ project in five countries in Central Europe—Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary and the Slovak Republic—aimed to consolidate the Quality Assurance Units set up earlier within the national asylum authorities. The close cooperation between UNHCR and State asylum authorities on this project helped build open and constructive relations. In other countries, bilateral cooperation with State authorities improved the quality of asylum decisions.

Improving access to territory

The Central European countries expanded cooperation between their immigration and border-control authorities and UNHCR's implementing partners in monitoring border points and airports. The cooperation also covered training to identify and assist newly arrived asylum-seekers.

Ensuring dignified reception conditions

Intensive monitoring allowed UNHCR and its partners to identify shortcomings in reception conditions and reveal problems relating to the detention of asylum-seekers. UNHCR sought to address these issues with government counterparts.

Promoting integration and resettlement

An integration evaluation tool to measure how well refugees integrate into host societies will be piloted in 2011. A number of countries have gained experience in resettlement through the implementation of small-scale resettlement programmes. Some countries in the subregion also participated in a European Union-sponsored pilot relocation programme, in which a small number of refugees from Malta were to be integrated locally in recipient countries. The subregion continued to manage two emergency transit centres for refugees *en route* to resettlement elsewhere.

Constraints

The global economic and financial crisis has had a negative effect on national asylum capacities and the integration of

refugees in the subregion. In these times of financial austerity, governments often favour strict border control over investments in the reception of asylum-seekers or the integration of refugees. In a number of countries, including those where political parties with anti-immigration agendas became more influential, public opinion and the overall climate were not supportive of people of concern to UNHCR.

In some countries, the rapid turnover of staff or frequent reorganizations in State agencies created obstacles to effective cooperation. Despite cordial relations with border authorities as a result of cooperation in border monitoring, impediments to the flow of information and limited transparency in border monitoring remain of concern. In a number of countries, more extensive use of detention of asylum-seekers, not always based on grounds regulated in law, and not always in adequate conditions, gave reasons for serious concern.

Operations

In **Bulgaria**, UNHCR and its partners monitored reception centres and provided social counselling for more than 325 asylum-seekers. It also provided legal counselling and representation to over 2,000 asylum-seekers.

UNHCR assisted the Bulgarian authorities in the drafting of the new National Programme for the Integration of Refugees, which includes a sound implementation mechanism, and three expert meetings on integration were organized. Bulgaria made preparations for a small-scale resettlement programme, creating a working group for this purpose in which UNHCR participates. UNHCR's implementing partners provided legal counselling in some 250 cases involving stateless asylum-seekers.

The **Czech Republic** chose not to participate in the FDQ project, but cooperated with UNHCR to improve the quality of asylum decisions. Successful engagement and interventions by UNHCR on lesbian, gender, bisexual, transsexual and intersex cases contributed to improvements in practices with regard to this category of claims. UNHCR worked with implementing partners to conduct research on refugee integration, specifically on access to housing, employment, education and nationality.

In the summer of 2010, the Czech Republic received some 40 resettled refugees. In addition, 10 refugees arrived in the country for emergency resettlement. UNHCR and its implementing partner closely monitored their integration. The Office also did a survey on refugee access to nationality and is following up on its recommendations.

In **Hungary**, where the capacity for administrative detention of asylum-seekers was increased from 300 to 630

places, UNHCR engaged a partner NGO to conduct rigorous detention monitoring. As recommended by UNHCR, some sub-standard administrative-detention facilities were closed and minimum standards for detention conditions were introduced in law.

In response to proposed changes to the asylum law, UNHCR negotiated successfully with the authorities to prevent a deterioration in procedural standards. In a pilot project, UNHCR's implementing partner provided psychosocial counselling to border management staff at Budapest airport, resulting in improved attitudes towards asylum-seekers arriving there.

In **Poland**, UNHCR and its partners established a special centre with expertise in counselling people detained for irregular entry. The conditions in 12 out of 14 reception centres were monitored and generally found to be adequate. The 2009 border monitoring agreement with the Polish border guards was strengthened in May 2010, when the role of UNHCR's implementing partner in border-monitoring work was formally recognized. UNHCR conducted research on refugee homelessness and organized a seminar on refugee access to housing, the labour market and education. UNHCR continued advocating for Poland's accession to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions.

In **Romania**, UNHCR worked with new implementing partners on refugee integration, social services and education, both in the Emergency Transit Centre in Timisoara and among the first group of refugees resettled in Romania. The transit of some 150 people through the Transit Centre in Timisoara facilitated their resettlement in third countries.

Romania received some 40 resettled refugees in mid-2010. UNHCR monitors their integration closely and is seeking to address specific integration challenges with the cooperation of the Government.

UNHCR convinced the border authorities to add a number of questions to the questionnaire used for irregular migrants, in order to improve the identification of those who may need international protection. A new leaflet with information on asylum procedures, especially for separated children, was piloted. UNHCR organized a conference on statelessness, after which a Working Group on the topic was established.

In the **Slovak Republic**, UNHCR monitored conditions in reception facilities and successfully negotiated with the authorities to address discrepancies in the services provided. UNHCR and its implementing partner were able to engage in border monitoring activities. The inclusion of cross-border information exchanges with counterparts in Ukraine improved border monitoring by UNHCR and its implementing partner.

Budget and expenditure in Central Europe | USD

| Country | | PILLAR 1 Refugee programme | PILLAR 2 Stateless programme | Total |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Hungary Regional Office¹ | Budget | 10,560,527 | 569,373 | 11,129,900 |
| | Expenditure | 7,170,754 | 374,503 | 7,545,257 |
| | Total budget | 10,560,527 | 569,373 | 11,129,900 |
| | Total expenditure | 7,170,754 | 374,503 | 7,545,257 |

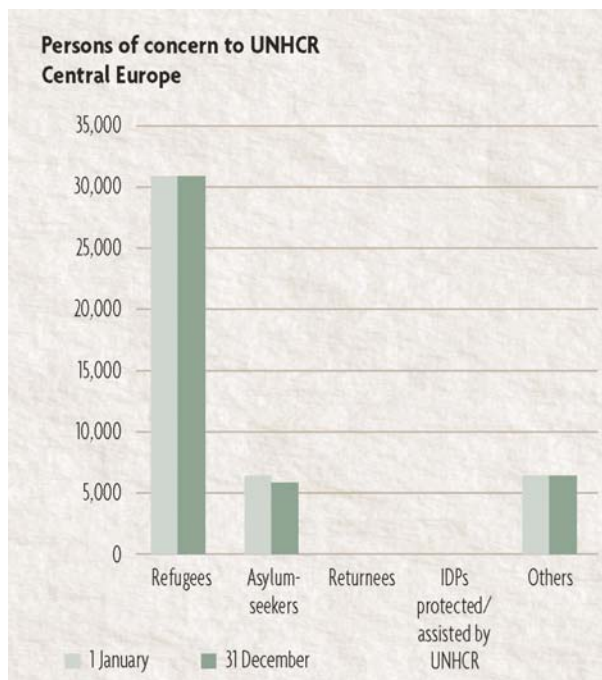
¹Includes activities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

In **Slovenia**, where UNHCR does not have an office, relations with partner organizations were reviewed and renewed, resulting in the resumption of border-monitoring activities in August 2010. Although Slovenia did not participate in the follow-up project on the quality of asylum procedures, the majority of first-instance decisions were reviewed on behalf of UNHCR.

A number of capacity-building activities were implemented, and UNHCR is advocating for Slovenia's accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The working group on sexual and gender-based violence successfully resolved six cases. Eight people arrived from Malta under the pilot EU relocation project, and UNHCR is monitoring their integration.

Financial information

The sharp decrease in budget for this subregion is mainly due to the fact that as from 2010 the budget of the operation in Turkey is shown under Eastern Europe and therefore is no longer part of this subregion's budget. Expenditure in this subregion mainly relates to increased advocacy and capacity-building for all operational priorities, but particularly in the area of durable solutions.



Voluntary contributions to Central Europe | USD

| Earmarking / Donor | PILLAR 1 Refugee programme | All pillars | Total |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| CENTRAL EUROPE SUBREGION | | | |
| United States of America | | 1,259,000 | 1,259,000 |
| Central Europe subtotal | 0 | 1,259,000 | 1,259,000 |
| CYPRUS | | | |
| Cyprus | | 2,442 | 2,442 |
| Cyprus subtotal | 0 | 2,442 | 2,442 |
| HUNGARY | | | |
| European Commission | 105,209 | | 105,209 |
| Hungary subtotal | 105,209 | 0 | 105,209 |
| ROMANIA | | | |
| International Organization for Migration | 82,592 | | 82,592 |
| Romania subtotal | 82,592 | 0 | 82,592 |
| SLOVAK REPUBLIC | | | |
| United States of America | 254,655 | | 254,655 |
| Slovak Republic subtotal | 254,655 | 0 | 254,655 |
| OTHER COUNTRIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE | | | |
| European Commission | 630,620 | | 630,620 |
| International Organization for Migration | 57,179 | | 57,179 |
| Other countries in Central Europe subtotal | 687,800 | 0 | 687,800 |
| Total | 1,130,256 | 1,261,442 | 2,391,698 |

Note: Includes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions to Pillars 3 and 4, supplementary budgets and the "New or additional activities - mandate-related" (NAM) reserve.