



Roma family returned to Kosovo, after almost ten years of exile in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Croatia

Montenegro

Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res. 1244)*

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

** Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)*

| Working environment |

The conflicts in the Balkans in the early 1990s displaced nearly three million people. Almost 20 years on, the vast majority of those uprooted have returned home or found other durable solutions, but nearly 330,000 people remain displaced.

This remaining population of concern to UNHCR includes internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees from the various parts of the former Yugoslavia, returnees and asylum-seekers as well as refugees from third countries and people at risk of statelessness. *De facto* statelessness is a major concern, particularly for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) minority groups.

South- Eastern Europe





Ending the protracted displacement that is a legacy of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia remains a key political imperative for the countries in the region. Since 2010, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia have, with the support of the international community, renewed their efforts to find permanent solutions for some 73,000 refugees from the 1991-1995 conflicts in the region.

Significant internal displacement is still present in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res. 1244), where nearly 232,000 people remain in need of solutions.

Major obstacles in the way of attaining durable solutions for refugees and IDPs are:

- The lack of adequate housing, especially for those living in collective centres and in substandard private accommodation, many of them older people, disabled or suffering serious illness.
- An absence of livelihood opportunities, due to the poor general economic situation.
- Difficulties in gaining access to basic rights and public services.

In parallel, the lack of civil registration and documentation is a major endemic problem common to all countries.

Situated at the doorstep of the European Union (EU), this region is on the route of many mixed flows of migrants and asylum-seekers transiting towards Western Europe. Accession to the EU remains a driving force in the development of comprehensive national asylum legislation, in line with international and European standards, but weaknesses in the

implementation of such legislation hamper the development of asylum space.

Strategy

The four main objectives that UNHCR will pursue in Eastern Europe are to:

- Support governments in a joint, regional, multi-year project seeking permanent solutions for the refugees from the 1991-1995 conflicts.
- Foster durable solutions for IDPs and returnees through assistance and technical support, bringing IDP protection and assistance needs into the mainstream of all programme activities, and mobilizing development actors.
- Ensure the development of asylum systems and practices in line with international and EU standards.
- Reduce statelessness and respond to the needs of people at risk of it.

In March 2010, Serbia hosted an International Conference on Durable Solutions that re-launched cooperation at the regional level with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro. In January 2011, the High Commissioner appointed a personal envoy to help resolve the protracted displacement in the Western Balkans, by assisting the four governments to develop a regional programme and to formulate a Joint Declaration confirming their common commitment to end the protracted displacement arising from the 1991-1995 conflicts.

A donor conference foreseen to take place in early 2012 will provide a last opportunity to seek the international community's support to address the outstanding needs of the remaining refugees. UNHCR will work closely with the governments, along with the EU, OSCE and the United States of America, while playing a catalytic role in resource mobilization.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNHCR has the additional responsibility under the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) to assist the authorities in facilitating return and finding durable solutions for refugees and IDPs. The Revised Strategy for the Implementation of Annex VII of the DPA, adopted in 2010, represents a vital effort in ending displacement within the country through the local integration of those no longer willing to return. UNHCR will also continue to assist the Government in its efforts to close down the remaining collective centres in the country, with the support of development actors.

The findings of the 2011 IDP Needs Assessment in Serbia have shown that nearly 80 per cent of IDPs from Kosovo are willing to remain in their place of displacement. UNHCR will accordingly support the authorities in Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res. 1244) to pursue voluntary returns, as well as local integration in the place of displacement, as durable solutions. Meanwhile, Serbia has adopted in 2011 a National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and IDPs, a framework for efforts to tackle the housing, health, education, employment and documentation needs of this population.

Advocacy with the authorities to incorporate IDP needs into pertinent national legislation and plans will remain high on UNHCR's agenda. It will also – albeit on a progressively reduced scale – facilitate access to free legal aid and income generation or livelihood assistance. IDPs with special needs will also receive some UNHCR assistance.

The common denominator in UNHCR's programmes across the region will be support for governments in developing and implementing their national asylum systems and legal and institutional frameworks. Providing training in refugee law and building the capacity of state authorities involved in the asylum system will be a priority. Efforts to ensure that people seeking international protection are identified and that their protection needs are fairly and fully assessed will continue.

UNHCR will also continue to monitor the situation of both voluntary and forced returnees to ensure their unhindered access to basic rights and assistance from relevant bodies. Another protection priority is to continue raising awareness of sexual and gender-based violence.

To reduce statelessness, UNHCR will help those in need of civil-status documentation and late birth registration. UNHCR will continue promoting accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness among countries still not party to it. Finally, UNHCR will work closely with the civil society, the EU, OSCE and UN agencies involved in the Balkans.

| Constraints |

Stability and political willingness are key components in ending the protracted refugee and IDP situations, improving asylum systems and ensuring the civil registration of those at risk of statelessness. Poor socio-economic conditions persist throughout the sub-region. Lack of housing, low living standards, unemployment, restrictions on access to education and health care, and lack of birth registration and civil status documentation continue to hinder local integration, return and reintegration. Inter-ethnic relations and governance issues also pose challenges in most of the countries in this region.

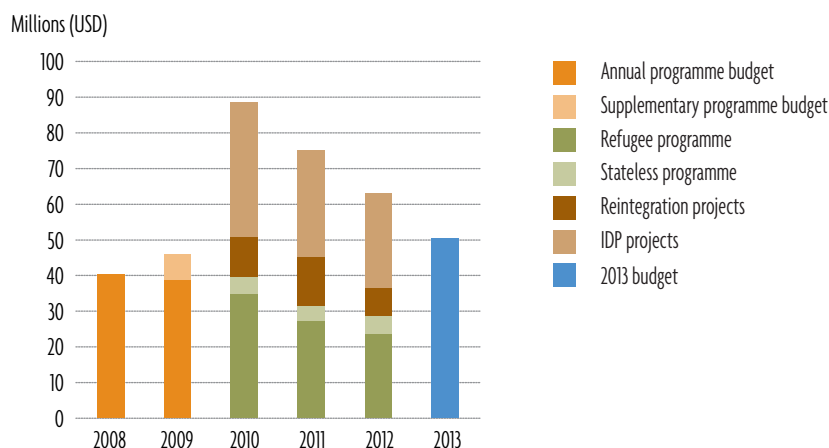
| Operations |

UNHCR's operations in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res. 1244)**, are presented in separate chapters.

By early 2012, **Croatia** is expected to host some 1,300 refugees and asylum-seekers. The country continues to be used mainly for transit, with more than 80 per cent of asylum applicants leaving within weeks.

Nearly 19,100 persons of concern have not yet settled housing, reconstruction and status issues. The voluntary repatriation continues of Croatian refugees, primarily from Serbia, where their number still approaches 60,500, although on a lower scale. Some 2,200 IDPs, mainly Serbs, remain displaced within Croatia. Statelessness is also a concern, with some 1,500 people at risk.

UNHCR's budget in South-Eastern Europe 2007 - 2012



In 2010 Croatia introduced important changes in its national legislation to harmonize it with EU standards and the 1951 Refugee Convention. UNHCR will focus on strengthening the country's reception and protection capacities. Protecting and assisting unaccompanied and separated children will remain a priority.

The attainment of durable solutions that allow closure of the 1991-1995 refugee chapter is an important challenge, particularly in view of Croatia's planned accession to the EU in 2013. In this framework, UNHCR will strengthen support for the Government of Croatia as it implements its multi-year strategy within the regional process. UNHCR will also continue promoting peace and community-building activities to improve the sustainability of return in war-affected communities.

Following the accession of Croatia in September 2011 to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, UNHCR will continue to assist people of concern in obtaining civil registration documentation.

In **Montenegro**, UNHCR will support the search for durable solutions for more than 16,000 displaced people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo.

Montenegro has made significant progress towards the local integration of displaced people, who have been granted privileged – although procedurally challenging – access to the status of foreigner with permanent residence. UNHCR will support the implementation of the local integration framework in close partnership with the EU. It will also continue providing up-to-date information from areas of origin to facilitate decisions on return.

UNHCR will assist those in need of civil status documentation required to facilitate their access to the new status of foreigner with permanent residence, and to re-acquire citizenship. Some 2,900 people are at risk of statelessness due to the lack of birth certificates. UNHCR will work with the EU and the UN Delivering as One initiative to find comprehensive solutions through local integration and voluntary return for some 2,000 RAE people from Kosovo living in the Konik area.

Although the number of asylum-seekers is on the increase, Montenegro remains primarily a transit country. UNHCR will help the Government to strengthen its national asylum system.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia hosts nearly 1,600 refugees, mostly of Roma ethnicity, who left their homes as a result of the 1999 conflict in Kosovo.

Asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Africa and the Middle East in the country numbered almost 400 in 2010, and this number is expected to increase, although most asylum-seekers depart within weeks of arrival. UNHCR will advocate for improvements in national asylum practices, both with regard to the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure and access to social and economic rights compatible with international standards and EU accession requirements.

UNHCR will give priority to achieving durable solutions for Kosovar refugees through voluntary return and local integration, in accordance with the Government's strategy. However, the non-availability of housing is a major constraint. UNHCR will partner with key stakeholders at the national level to address the housing needs of some 180 vulnerable families opting for local integration.

Advocating for the prevention of statelessness, including accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, remains at the forefront of UNHCR activities in the country where nearly 1,200 people are at risk of statelessness. UNHCR will assist the authorities to establish a procedure to determine the status of *de jure* stateless people.

Financial information

The 2012 budget is USD 63.5 million, of which 39 per cent is for refugees, 44 per cent for IDPs, 11 per cent for reintegration and 6 per cent for stateless people. This budget is 16 per cent less than in 2011, and 29 per cent less than 2010, reflecting the progressive downsizing of UNHCR's operations in the region.

UNHCR Budget in South-Eastern Europe (USD)

OPERATION	2011 REVISED BUDGET	2012				TOTAL	2013
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17,520,923	4,428,850	1,809,413	0	8,786,737	15,025,000	9,154,490
Croatia	6,870,298	1,396,162	351,907	3,251,931	0	5,000,000	5,000,000
Montenegro	5,481,469	4,204,320	341,558	0	0	4,545,878	4,249,999
Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res. 1244)	42,246,910	10,124,995	1,991,985	4,862,864	18,020,157	35,000,000	28,250,000
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3,512,808	3,626,670	356,975	0	0	3,983,645	3,983,645
Total	75,632,408	23,780,997	4,851,837	8,114,795	26,806,893	63,554,523	50,638,135