

EASTERN EUROPE



A UNHCR partner organization provides legal advice to asylum-seekers at Chisinau airport (Republic of Moldova)



Armenia

Azerbaijan

Belarus

Georgia

Republic of Moldova

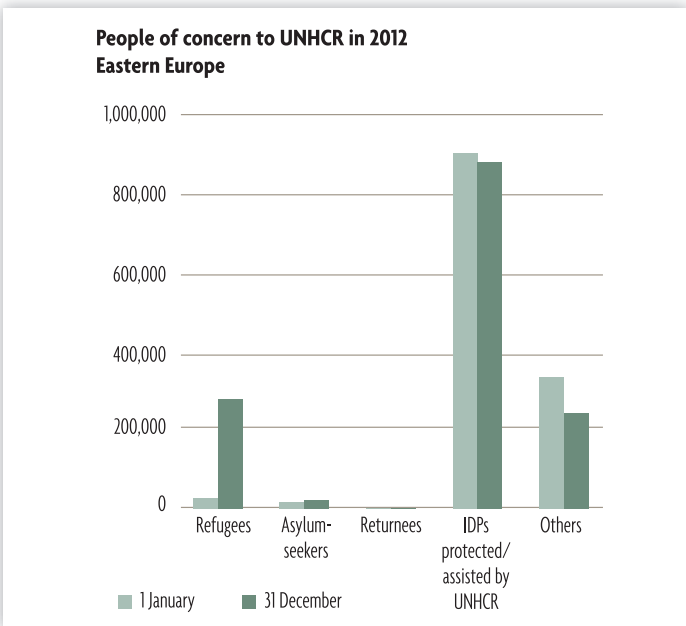
Russian Federation

Turkey

Ukraine

Highlights

- As pledged in 2011, the Republic of Moldova acceded to the two Statelessness Conventions. In Ukraine, Parliament adopted legislation pertaining to accession to the Conventions. Georgia and the Republic of Moldova fulfilled their 2011 pledges by establishing statelessness determination procedures. The Russian Federation adopted an amendment to the Citizenship Law addressing the situation of stateless former Soviet citizens, fulfilling a commitment it made in 2011.
- The adoption of the “Concept on the State Migration Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025” in 2012 will result in a comprehensive review of a series of legislative acts, including the law on refugees.
- Belarus began to implement new laws covering refugee status determination (RSD) procedures and the integration of foreigners, including refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection.



Working environment

In Eastern Europe, UNHCR worked in a variety of situations involving refugees, asylum-seekers in the context of complex mixed-migration flows, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless persons. Asylum systems in the subregion remained vulnerable: there were concerns about access to territory and asylum procedures, instances of *refoulement*, detention, extradition, deportation, and some cases of abduction of people of concern. Additional apprehensions related to the treatment of unaccompanied minors, low recognition rates and irregular movements with the aid of people smugglers. Limited access to protection for some nationalities and poor integration opportunities led many to make repeated attempts to reach countries perceived to be more respectful of refugee rights.

The regional protection and local integration programmes funded by the European Union (EU) in Eastern Europe, particularly in Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, have succeeded in integrating protection monitoring, training, capacity building and local integration into national structures. The Republic of Moldova, for instance, has begun to build protection mechanisms for stateless persons at the national level. However, despite the positive developments in Eastern Europe, in 2012 statelessness affected approximately 210,000 people in the region and continues to be a major concern of UNHCR.

Large-scale internal displacement also remained a challenge in Eastern Europe. Up to a million individuals were still displaced in the Caucasus region. UNHCR continued to protect and assist IDPs in most countries in the region in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. It also promoted durable solutions, including return and local integration, whenever possible.

Achievements and impact

UNHCR's three main objectives in Eastern Europe were to strengthen national asylum systems; prevent and reduce statelessness and promote accession to the Statelessness Conventions; and meet the essential needs of IDPs while prioritizing solution in terms of return and local integration. To this end, it intensified cooperation with Governments and other relevant actors. These included the European Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, particularly its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and NGOs. To support national asylum systems, UNHCR prepared to launch the Asylum Quality Initiative for Eastern Europe and the south Caucasus that will be implemented in six countries in 2013.

Constraints

A number of Eastern European countries gave priority to controlling irregular migration over asylum, with insufficient resources directed to the latter. This, combined with legislative gaps, made it difficult for Governments to comply with their

commitments to meet international standards in refugee protection.

As a consequence, refugees and asylum-seekers faced restrictive registration policies, long waiting periods with limited assistance, and had difficulties in obtaining appropriate documents or legal status. Access to social assistance and local labour opportunities remained challenging, leaving many with no recourse but to depend on international assistance. The implementation of local integration schemes for recognized refugees throughout Eastern Europe was sporadic, and was often pursued without local government engagement. Refugees' efforts to integrate into local societies were also hindered in some countries by xenophobia and racism.

Operations

*Operations in **Turkey** are described in a separate chapter.*

The focus of UNHCR's activities in **Armenia** was on safeguarding previously established refugee protection standards. Strong advocacy by the Office prevented the introduction of substantive modifications to the current legislation that would have restricted protection.

The limited amount of assistance that UNHCR was able to provide in Armenia benefited 116 refugees from the Community Technology Access Project for Armenia, of whom 56 participated in a vocational project implemented with the cooperation of the State Employment Agency. Sixteen individuals received revolving loans to help them improve their self-reliance.

UNHCR offered advice on amendments to the Citizenship Law which repealed a provision that deprived those who had lived abroad for a long time of their nationality. The findings of a statelessness mapping exercise helped convince the Government to make a commitment to establish a statelessness determination procedure. UNHCR is providing technical support in this effort.

In **Azerbaijan**, UNHCR provided legal assistance to some 290 people of concern to help them register marriages, obtain birth certificates and regularize their stay. More than 5,600 people benefitted from counselling in the three legal aid centres in the country. A series of round tables helped raise the awareness among people of concern about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and the availability of referral mechanisms to address it. Some 52 per cent of all asylum-seekers and refugees benefitted from such activities.

UNHCR helped ensure access to education for refugee children, including through financial aid to vulnerable families. Moreover, nearly 1,500 refugees received primary health care and some 300 women benefitted from reproductive health and family planning services. Livelihoods programmes conducted in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council provided small-business grants to some 150 people. UNHCR also focused on identifying the needs of IDPs and addressing gaps in the current response through awareness raising and advocacy.

There were 155 resettlement referrals in Azerbaijan in 2012, and 180 departures, including of people accepted in previous years.

The operation in **Georgia** focused on the naturalization of Chechen refugees from the Russian Federation, the implementation of the statelessness determination procedure and the acquisition or confirmation of Georgian nationality for some 400 people, under the Office's statelessness mandate. UNHCR also implemented shelter and livelihood projects for IDPs in Abkhazia and provided policy support to the Government on refugee, IDP and statelessness issues.

UNHCR and its partners attained the benchmark of 60 per cent of IDPs benefitting from the privatization of their shelter, including through the construction or rehabilitation of 136 homes in Abkhazia. A total of 2,685 children and 484 teachers in 25 educational institutions received winterization assistance. There was progress as well in reducing the incidence of SGBV and improving the quality of the response to it, achieved through awareness-raising campaigns and the setting up of response mechanisms. Some 85 per cent of known survivors of SGBV received legal and/or psychological counselling and assistance.

The **Regional Office in Kyiv**, which covers **Belarus, the Republic of Moldova** and **Ukraine**, supported the respective Governments through two EU-funded projects designed to improve access to protection at borders and in country, and to promote the self-sufficiency of refugees. UNHCR strengthened partnerships with the authorities in Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to help them build asylum systems that meet international standards.

In **Ukraine**, the ongoing reorganization of the State Migration Service prompted UNHCR to undertake direct protection interventions and assistance. New legislation adopted by Parliament and the introduction of complementary protection allowed many previously rejected asylum-seekers to reapply, leading to a significant increase in the number of new applicants (from 890 in 2011 to 1,860 in 2012). Complementary protection was granted to 89 persons. However, most cases remained pending.

UNHCR's enhanced monitoring outreach helped to improve access to territory and detention practices in Ukraine, where NGOs were UNHCR's main partners in providing assistance to the most destitute. Closer cooperation with the courts improved the quality of decision-making and fewer asylum-seekers were placed in detention or received expulsion orders. UNHCR provided free legal assistance through a network of five implementing partners throughout Ukraine. Some 2,500 persons, many of them without legal status, were assisted in this way.

In **Belarus**, the newly adopted National Programme on Demographic Security 2011-2015 framework and close

cooperation with the authorities at all levels allowed UNHCR to intensify refugee integration activities in several regions.

In the **Republic of Moldova**, the entry into force of a new law on the integration of foreigners and refugees provides a solid legal framework for UNHCR's activities. The number of refugees in the country remained modest, although a significant increase in the number of applications from Syria was registered. The national protection system reacted flexibly and there were no instances of *refoulement*. Previously undocumented asylum-seekers were registered.

Mechanisms to address statelessness were strengthened in the region with the establishment of a statelessness determination procedure in the Republic of Moldova and the adoption of legislation on accession to the Statelessness Conventions in **Ukraine**. Persons under UNHCR's statelessness mandate benefited from naturalization and confirmation of nationality in the three countries.

In the **Russian Federation**, UNHCR contributed to the development of the national asylum system, including legislation and the establishment of airport reception procedures. UNHCR worked with the authorities to improve the quality of RSD procedures. Despite the planned adoption of a new Law on Refugees in 2014, several amendments were made to the existing law to grant refugee status for an indefinite period of time instead of the initial three-year deadline.

UNHCR supported legal aid and counselling centres throughout the Russian Federation. Assistance in individual cases was optimized to help the authorities address the needs of urban refugees. Intensive lobbying resulted in the extension of the State medical insurance programme to recognized refugees and holders of temporary asylum, allowing them to avail themselves of the same level of services as the local population.

Efforts to promote accession to the two Statelessness Conventions continued. A new amendment to the Russian Federation Citizenship Law makes it easier for former Soviet citizens to apply for citizenship. Some 1,750 individuals were assisted by UNHCR's legal-aid partners to facilitate their access to naturalization procedures.

In 2012, some 260 people were accepted for resettlement and 225 individuals left the Russian Federation for their new homes. UNHCR's public information campaigns over the last two decades have fostered greater understanding and tolerance towards people of concern through various publications, some 52 weekly radio programmes, interviews with print media and updates on the website. UNHCR maintained its advocacy to counter racism and xenophobia and create an environment conducive to local integration.

| Financial information |

Of the total requirements (not counting those related to the Syria emergency in Turkey) of USD 60 million for Eastern Europe in 2012, approximately 74 per cent was allocated to refugee programmes and to building the capacity of the asylum system; over 20 per cent was for IDP activities; and some 4 per cent each went to statelessness programmes and reintegration activities.

Excluding the Syria emergency, total requirements for the subregion were lower than in 2011, owing to a reduction in needs among IDP populations in Georgia and the Russian Federation. Overall, including Syria emergency costs, total expenditure for the subregion was USD 66.6 million, against a budget of USD 115.7 million.

Budget and expenditure in Eastern Europe | USD

Operation		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	Total
Armenia	Budget	4,309,834	138,768	0	4,448,602
	Expenditure	1,407,416	101,750	0	1,509,166
Azerbaijan	Budget	4,297,640	384,517	1,234,274	5,916,431
	Expenditure	2,842,067	104,268	496,452	3,442,787
Georgia	Budget	2,079,375	736,930	12,142,790	14,959,095
	Expenditure	1,509,983	573,434	6,007,633	8,091,050
Russian Federation	Budget	9,587,476	506,698	0	10,094,174
	Expenditure	6,987,133	470,303	0	7,457,436
Turkey	Budget	70,934,298	44,000	0	70,978,298
	Expenditure	38,939,260	7,431	0	38,946,691
Ukraine Regional Office ¹	Budget	8,605,914	653,685	0	9,259,599
	Expenditure	6,867,743	311,878	0	7,179,621
Total budget		99,814,537	2,464,598	13,377,064	115,656,199
Total expenditure		58,553,602	1,569,064	6,504,085	66,626,751

¹ Includes activities in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova.

Voluntary contributions to Eastern Europe | USD

Earmarking / Donor	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
EASTERN EUROPE SUBREGION				
United States of America			1,000,000	1,000,000
Eastern Europe subtotal	0	0	1,000,000	1,000,000
ARMENIA				
Armenia	98,712			98,712
Russian Federation			150,000	150,000
Armenia subtotal	98,712	0	150,000	248,712
AZERBAIJAN				
Azerbaijan		25,478		25,478
Norway		73,566		73,566
Azerbaijan subtotal	0	99,044	0	99,044
GEORGIA				
Estonia		72,084		72,084
European Union		597,838		597,838
Netherlands		676,632		676,632
United States of America			800,000	800,000
USA for UNHCR		18,000		18,000
Georgia subtotal	0	1,364,554	800,000	2,164,554
RUSSIAN FEDERATION				
Russian Federation			150,000	150,000
United States of America			250,000	250,000
Russian Federation subtotal	0	0	400,000	400,000

Earmarking / Donor	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
TURKEY				
Brazil	120,000			120,000
Central Emergency Response Fund	1,299,302			1,299,302
European Union	1,242,236			1,242,236
France	448,310			448,310
Italy	313,676			313,676
Japan	100,000			100,000
New Zealand	819,001			819,001
Republic of Korea	300,000			300,000
Switzerland	537,634			537,634
United Kingdom	1,605,136			1,605,136
United States of America	10,649,704			10,649,704
Turkey subtotal	17,435,000	0	0	17,435,000
UKRAINE REGIONAL OFFICE				
European Union	1,968,728			1,968,728
Hewlett-Packard	34,438			34,438
Russian Federation			150,000	150,000
Ukraine Regional Office subtotal	2,003,166	0	150,000	2,153,166
Total	19,536,878	1,463,597	2,500,000	23,500,475

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.