

Eastern Europe

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Georgia
Republic of Moldova
Russian Federation
Ukraine

| Working environment |

UNHCR works in a diverse range of situations in Eastern Europe, involving asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and stateless people.

Asylum systems in the subregion remain fragile and vulnerable to political changes and sensitivities. UNHCR is concerned about access to territory and asylum procedures, instances of *refoulement*, low recognition rates, and the increasing use of complementary forms of protection instead of the 1951 Convention status. On the other hand, there have been positive developments in strengthening legislative asylum frameworks in Turkey and Ukraine. In the Russian Federation there have also been improvements in the reception of asylum-seekers and the determination of their claims.

Georgia, close to the South Ossetia Administrative Border Line, in Mejvriskhevi village, stands a greenhouse providing job opportunities to people of concern.



The frequent reorganization of government departments handling border management, migration and asylum can lead to dysfunctional asylum systems. This sometimes results in people of concern becoming part of irregular movements, or resorting to people smugglers.

UNHCR has noted achievements in the reduction of statelessness, especially in the Russian Federation where, between 2003 and 2010, more than 600,000 formerly stateless people were naturalized. Nonetheless, statelessness remains an issue of concern throughout the subregion, mainly as a consequence of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the difficulties facing national minorities seeking to prove their citizenship. UNHCR estimates that there are some 120,000 stateless people in Eastern Europe.

Large-scale internal displacement too remains a challenge in Eastern Europe. Up to a million people are still displaced in the Caucasus region. UNHCR protects and assists IDPs in most countries in the region in accordance with the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. It promotes durable solutions, including return and local integration when possible.

At the behest of and in consultation with the Russian Government, UNHCR closed its sub-office in Vladikavkaz in 2011, and ended direct assistance for IDPs, though maintaining its mandate-based protection advocacy programmes. Government plans foresee that all citizens, including remaining vulnerable populations, will benefit from Russian-funded investment and development.



Strategy

UNHCR's three main objectives in Eastern Europe remain the strengthening of national asylum systems; the prevention and reduction of statelessness while promoting accession to the statelessness Conventions; and meeting the essential needs of IDPs while focusing on return and local integration.

In an effort to help strengthen national asylum systems in the subregion, UNHCR will intensify its cooperation with governments and other relevant actors, including the European Commission, NGOs and regional actors such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

These partnerships will form one component of UNHCR's response to the needs of the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees. The 10-Point Plan of Action for refugee protection in the context of mixed migration continues to provide a guiding framework for cooperation with national and regional partners on asylum and migration issues.

Constraints

A number of Eastern European countries often prioritize irregular migration control over asylum. A lack of resources also makes it difficult for some governments to comply with their commitments to meet international standards in refugee protection. As a consequence, refugees and asylum-seekers are deprived of adequate procedures. Xenophobia and racism also stand as hurdles in the way of refugee integration.

Many asylum-seekers and refugees in Eastern Europe are dependent on the limited financial support they receive from UNHCR, as they are unable to access state assistance or local labour markets, due to their legal status or restrictive registration policies. The scarcity of opportunities for local integration compels them to move onwards to other European Union countries.

Local integration schemes for recognized refugees throughout Eastern Europe are usually limited and given low priority within government plans, which often devote few or no resources to refugee or IDP integration. In light of reported

improvements of the humanitarian situation in the North Caucasus and the efforts deployed by the Government of the Russian Federation in the area to include remaining vulnerable populations into investment programmes, UNHCR agreed to discontinue its direct assistance to IDPs and its permanent presence in the region. The Office will nevertheless continue its protection advocacy, contribute to sustainable solutions for most vulnerable people of concern, and facilitate voluntary return.

Operations

The operation in **Turkey** is described in a separate chapter.

In **Armenia**, UNHCR will monitor protection and promote international standards for the treatment of refugees. It will provide focused assistance to help the most vulnerable people of concern in achieving self-reliance, and will mobilize local partners and institutions to support the integration of refugees. UNHCR will also encourage community-based activities, emphasizing capacity-building among refugee community associations. Assisting the authorities in building asylum institutions will be another key element of its activities.

UNHCR will pursue structured consultations with the State Migration Service, Parliament and law enforcement bodies in Azerbaijan to strengthen their asylum system. Refugees living in urban areas will be assisted to become self-reliant. UNHCR will continue to pursue advocacy for the protection of IDPs, while supporting the Government's efforts to find durable solutions, including local integration when appropriate.

The work of the Regional Representation in Kyiv, which covers **Belarus**, the **Republic of Moldova** and **Ukraine**, will continue to be based on the 10-Point Plan of Action, as a framework for working with mixed migration movements.

Strategic action will again focus on: (i) enhancing compliance with international standards, in particular through protection-sensitive approaches to asylum issues; (ii) supporting the local integration of refugees and the resettlement of those for whom integration in the region is not an option; (iii) advocating for accessions to the statelessness Conventions and better identification of and support to stateless persons; and (iv) helping people of concern who are not assisted by government systems, while encouraging governments to take responsibility for them.

In view of the global financial crisis, governments will continue to count on UNHCR's support to help them comply with international standards, especially in Ukraine, where the

State Migration Service is being reformed. Protection monitoring, undertaken jointly by the authorities, UNHCR, IOM and NGOs, continues to be an important mechanism to ensure access to the territory and the asylum procedure.

In **Georgia**, UNHCR protects and assists some 273,000 people. Some 129,000 IDPs are on the verge of achieving a durable solution, but still need humanitarian and development support. A small number of refugees and asylum-seekers benefit from UNHCR's efforts to ensure full implementation of the new refugee law, scheduled for adoption in 2011. The number of stateless and potentially stateless persons should be reduced, through the application of earlier amendments to legislation, and once Georgia has acceded to the statelessness instruments.

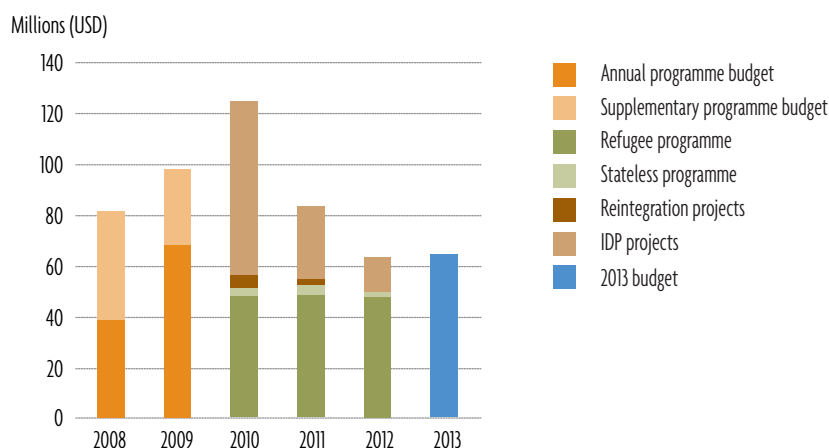
After substantially reducing its assistance, particularly for housing, UNHCR will focus on its protection strategy, which aims at: (i) realizing durable solutions for IDPs (local integration) and refugees (naturalization and local integration); (ii) broadening humanitarian space and humanitarian access; (iii) contributing to the Geneva Discussions process by fostering trust among different groups, and ensuring the rights of IDPs; (iv) building the capacity of the government and NGOs, including through policy advice, support for the development of new laws, plans and strategies; (v) monitoring protection and response and their coordination among all actors; and (vi) community mobilization and protection outreach.

The year 2012 should herald a crucial transition in Georgia from humanitarian interventions for refugees and IDPs to sustainable longer-term development in line with the 2011-2015 UN Development Assistance Framework plan for the country. Joint action with development partners, in particular UNDP, is envisaged to integrate refugees and IDPs into development programmes.

In the **Russian Federation**, UNHCR will focus on quality-assurance measures to strengthen the national asylum system, including access to the asylum system at borders, and to contribute to the Government's plans to bring its reception infrastructure and processes up to full international standards.

In consultation with the Government, UNHCR will accelerate the process of finding a durable solution to a protracted caseload of "legacy cases" – people whose international protection needs were recognized by UNHCR prior to the handover of status determination responsibilities to the Russian authorities in 2008, but who have been unable to fully regularize their situation within the national system.

UNHCR's budget in Eastern Europe 2008 – 2013



Efforts aimed at preventing and reducing statelessness will continue, as will advocacy for a greater role to be played by the Russian Federation on the issue, both within and outside its borders.

UNHCR will complement federal and local government endeavours in the North Caucasus (where it phased out its direct assistance programmes for IDPs) through its protection partnerships throughout the Russian Federation in support of asylum-seekers and people in a refugee-like situation, stateless persons and those voluntarily returning from abroad.

Finally, UNHCR will aim at activating governmental and private-sector partnerships in the Russian Federation to raise awareness, promote advocacy and reinforce financial support for the cause of the displaced worldwide.

Financial information

Of the total requirements of USD 63.6 million for Eastern Europe in 2012, by far the largest share is for refugees, asylum-seekers and asylum system building, with smaller allocations for statelessness, reintegration and for IDPs. The total requirements are lower than in 2011, due to decreased budgets for IDPs, mainly in Georgia and the Russian Federation.

In 2013 total requirements stand at USD 65 million of which over three-quarters is for refugees, asylum-seekers and the strengthening of asylum systems, and lesser amounts for IDPs and for statelessness. The slight net decrease in the overall requirements is due to the gradual phasing down of involvement in IDP issues, outweighing the steadily growing needs for refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR Budget in Eastern Europe (USD)

OPERATION	2011 REVISED BUDGET	2012				2013
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	TOTAL	
Armenia	3,451,602	4,308,834	138,768	0	4,447,602	4,250,602
Azerbaijan	5,933,021	4,296,141	384,516	1,234,275	5,914,932	5,921,150
Georgia	18,635,733	2,074,376	736,931	12,142,791	14,954,098	14,323,384
Russian Federation	24,308,250	9,583,476	506,698	0	10,090,175	10,756,000
Turkey	20,398,318	18,914,165	44,000	0	18,958,165	20,440,000
Ukraine Regional Office	11,080,404	8,547,574	653,685	0	9,201,259	9,278,201
Total	83,807,328	47,724,567	2,464,598	13,377,066	63,566,230	64,969,337