

Chechen asylum-seeker children play in the Biala Podlaska Reception Centre in Biala Podlaska, Poland.



Albania

Andorra

Austria

Belgium

Bulgaria

Cyprus

Czech Republic

Denmark

Estonia

Finland

France

Germany

Greece

Holy See

Hungary

Iceland

Ireland

Italy

Latvia

Liechtenstein

Lithuania

Luxembourg

Malta

Monaco

Netherlands

Norway

Poland

Portugal

Romania

San Marino

Slovak Republic

Slovenia

Spain

Sweden

Switzerland

United Kingdom of

Great Britain and

Northern Ireland



Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe

Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe



Working environment

This subregion includes 36 States, with varying experience in asylum and immigration, and differing traditions and systems. Twenty-seven of them are Member States of the European Union (EU). While the EU's efforts to build a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) have led to greater harmonization in the legal framework for asylum, in practice differences persist among Member States. Negotiations continue on amendments to national legislation while practical cooperation is given greater focus. The recently-created European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has now developed its structures and has progressed towards full operation in the second half of 2011.

The sub-region has seen an 11 per cent increase in asylum applications during the first half of 2011, as compared to the same period in 2010, with new arrivals predominantly from Afghanistan, Serbia and Iraq. Despite the reduction in the number of individuals seeking international protection in Greece, there have been many new arrivals by sea from North Africa to Italy and Malta.

France, Germany and Sweden are among the countries receiving the largest numbers of asylum-seekers in Europe. This subregion hosts almost all refugees accepted for resettlement in Europe, and includes 14 of UNHCR's top 20 donors.

Refugee and migration movements following political turmoil in North Africa have given rise to new challenges in 2011. UNHCR will continue to work closely with affected governments to ensure protection-sensitive responses. In the face of worsening economic difficulties, UNHCR has seen a hardening of national attitudes towards immigration and

integration in some countries, also affecting refugees. UNHCR is therefore working to ensure access to territory and asylum procedures, the local integration of refugees, and the use of resettlement for specific cases.

In its ongoing efforts to support governments in developing and maintaining high-quality asylum systems, UNHCR focuses on the harmonization of legislation and practice relating to refugee status and subsidiary protection. It is mainly concerned about diverging standards in the treatment of asylum-seekers; the use of detention at different stages of the asylum procedure; the lack of consistent quality in decision-making, and the continuing need for age- and gender-sensitive responses for particular groups. The xenophobia, discrimination and racism observed in the subregion are also a cause for alarm.

Strategy in 2012

Four Regional Offices—in Brussels, Stockholm, Budapest and Rome—as well as the country office in Spain coordinate with the Regional Office in Kyiv and country offices elsewhere to ensure coherence in UNHCR's programmes throughout Europe.

UNHCR's strategy comprises four sets of operational objectives, as outlined in the "Operations" subsection below.

These objectives will be pursued through collaboration with EU institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and IOM, as well as other international organizations, NGOs, the judiciary and academia. UNHCR will use and promote participatory assessments to gather information on persons of concern. It will continue to work at national and regional levels in the development of law and practice related to international protection. It will support the EU as it progresses towards

establishing the Common European Asylum System. UNHCR is now represented on the Management Board of EASO. Current collaboration and working arrangements with the Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency will also be maintained.

Constraints

Migration and asylum, along with national security, are key issues in the countries in the subregion. Potential political changes in some countries in 2011-2012 may bring policy shifts with a direct impact on international protection, including access to territory and asylum procedures. These could include tighter border control measures, penalties for illegal entry and the increased use of detention affecting asylum-seekers. Ensuring the consistent application of evolving EU legal norms remains a challenge. The worsening economic situation in some countries may aggravate already negative attitudes among host communities towards asylum-seekers and refugees.

Operations

● *Safeguarding international protection space, building effective asylum systems*

UNHCR's activities will be dominated by challenges emerging from mixed flows of irregular migrants and asylum-seekers. UNHCR will promote protection-sensitive border measures, to ensure that those seeking protection are properly identified and have access to territories and procedures to assess their needs. UNHCR will also advocate for alternatives to detention, especially for vulnerable individuals. It will offer technical advice and support at both national and EU levels, and submit its views to national and regional courts in order to uphold and improve protection standards, and promote quality and consistency in asylum decisions.

The "Further Developing Quality" project, addressing the quality of asylum systems in Central and Southern Europe and supported by the European Refugee Fund, is nearing completion, with positive results. Quality initiatives are also foreseen or ongoing in Austria, France, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In Central Europe, the focus will be on bodies responsible for auditing quality. UNHCR will continue its operational role in national asylum procedures in Austria, France, Italy and Spain; it has recently taken on such a role in Greece to assist in the country's reform of its asylum system.

The particular needs of victims of trafficking, women with special needs and unaccompanied and separated children will be the focus of capacity-building events throughout the region, notably in Austria, the Nordic countries, Switzerland and Ireland. Additional initiatives to enhance protection of vulnerable groups include the upcoming *Guidance on Determining the Best Interests of the Child in Industrialized Countries* to be published end 2011, and will be followed by training in selected countries. UNHCR has also launched the "Children on the Move" project in Greece, Italy and France,

funded through the European Refugee Fund in 2011, and scheduled for completion in 2012.

● *Access to territorial protection and fair asylum procedures, including at borders.*

UNHCR will focus its activities on meeting the ongoing challenges generated by mixed migration flows. Following events in North Africa, especially Libya, more efforts are required to ensure rescue-at-sea and protection-sensitive border management. UNHCR will work closely with national authorities, Frontex and others to promote these principles.

In Central Europe, UNHCR will strengthen border monitoring and the sharing of information and best practices. It will step up its efforts to assist countries facing particular pressures, such as in Greece, Malta and Italy. UNHCR will also work to promote alternatives to detention, particularly of children, and ensure adequate reception conditions.

The application of the Dublin II Regulation to identify the State responsible for an asylum claim has profound implications for asylum-seeker movements within Europe. UNHCR is therefore calling for a cautious, differentiated approach to the application of its provisions in order to minimize the use of detention and prevent family separation.

● *Promoting durable solutions*

The local integration of refugees remains a concern. UNHCR will therefore give priority to promoting refugee-specific measures within national integration policies and legislation, along with a focus on the legal dimension of integration. With differing practices among countries in the region, UNHCR will work with governments to find best-practice models that improve the socio-economic integration of people of concern.

The promotion of resettlement as a durable solution will remain a priority, encouraging burden- and responsibility-sharing through the intra-European relocation of refugees. It will build partnerships and work to empower communities to receive resettled refugees, including through a European Union funded project commencing in late 2011, which aims to establish a network of local authorities and focus on building their capacity in this area. UNHCR will continue to provide support to the two Emergency Transit Centres in Romania and the Slovak Republic, as well as to States aspiring to be resettlement countries.

Ensuring voluntary and dignified returns will be part of UNHCR's work in Germany, Austria, Italy and Greece, especially in response to mixed migratory movements. The dignified return of failed asylum-seekers, or transfers from the subregion to safe third countries will also be among UNHCR's priorities.

UNHCR will continue to advocate for the accession of all countries to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. It will step up its work in assisting governments to identify stateless people, and promote the development of national identification mechanisms and solutions. Studies mapping stateless populations already undertaken in Italy, Greece and Albania will be extended to Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Slovak Republic, Poland, the Czech Republic, Denmark and the three Baltic states.

Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe

● Mobilizing resources and support for UNHCR's work worldwide

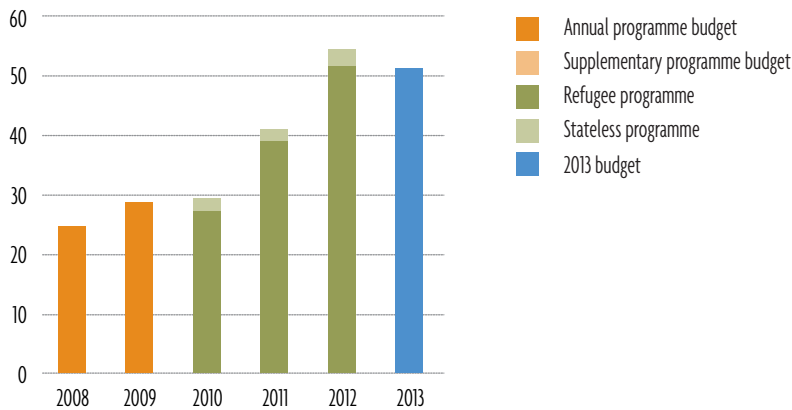
UNHCR relies on the strong political and economic support of many governments in Europe. With global changes affecting stability, economic prosperity and migration, strong partnerships and reinforced international cooperation are paramount. UNHCR will increase its efforts to maintain and foster new alliances, to seek broad public understanding and support for its work, and to mobilize resources from governmental, inter-governmental and private sources.

| Financial information |

The budget for this sub-region shows a 9 per cent increase from 2011 to 2012—from USD 49.9 million to USD 54.4 million. This is mainly due to the much-needed reform of the asylum system in Greece. Budget increases for Central Europe in 2012 relate mainly to the Pillar 1 programme, with intensified advocacy and capacity-building to safeguard the rights of asylum-seekers. In addition there are small budget increases in countries covered by the Regional Office for Western Europe, while elsewhere budgets remain relatively stable.

UNHCR's budget in Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe 2008 – 2013

Millions (USD)



UNHCR Budget in Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe (USD)

| OPERATION | 2011 REVISED BUDGET | 2012 | | | 2013 |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | | REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1 | STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2 | TOTAL | |
| Belgium Regional Office | 12,840,977 | 13,918,971 | 1,317,258 | 15,236,229 | 13,571,750 |
| Hungary Regional Office | 9,822,606 | 10,291,749 | 828,957 | 11,120,706 | 11,273,614 |
| Italy Regional Office | 19,079,384 | 18,650,511 | 142,584 | 18,793,095 | 17,942,502 |
| Spain | 1,595,952 | 1,442,586 | 76,315 | 1,518,901 | 1,424,100 |
| Sweden Regional Office | 2,773,516 | 2,173,852 | 610,039 | 2,783,891 | 2,737,323 |
| Regional Activities | 3,775,083 | 4,954,155 | 0 | 4,954,155 | 4,286,880 |
| Total | 49,887,519 | 51,431,824 | 2,975,154 | 54,406,978 | 51,236,170 |

Note: As of 2012, Central Europe is reported under Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe.