

# NORTHERN, WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE



**UNHCR**

2013 GLOBAL REPORT

Albania  
Andorra  
Austria  
Belgium  
Bulgaria  
Cyprus  
Czech Republic  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
France  
Germany  
Greece  
Holy See (the)  
Hungary  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Italy  
Latvia  
Liechtenstein  
Lithuania  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
Monaco  
Netherlands (the)  
Norway  
Poland  
Portugal  
Romania  
San Marino  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom of Great  
Britain and Northern  
Ireland (the)



Syrian refugees are issued a permit to stay for two years under Germany's Humanitarian Assistance Programme

UNHCR / R. BRUNNERT





# | Overview |



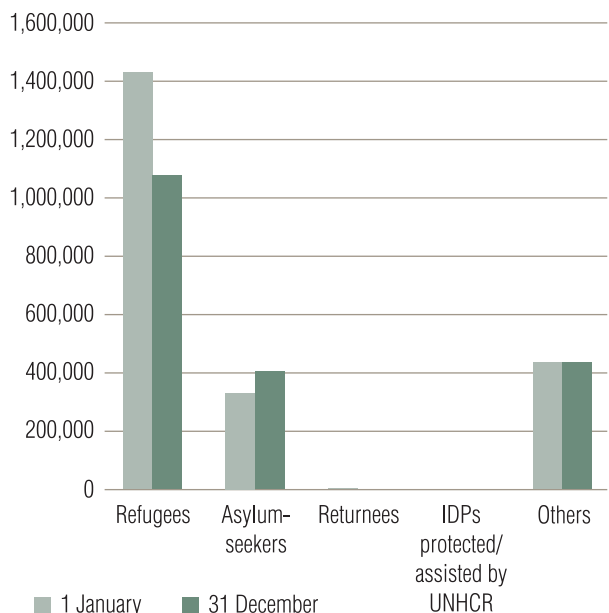
## Highlights

- With the June 2013 adoption of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) within the European Union, the Office’s focus has been on coherent transposition and implementation in EU member States. UNHCR positively influenced substantial components of the CEAS package.
- There was a significant influx of Syrian asylum-seekers, with 49,000 new applications registered in the 28 EU countries. While most States granted some form of protection to Syrians, “push-backs” were observed at some external borders.
- Due to a sudden increase in predominantly Syrian asylum-seekers in Bulgaria, UNHCR and its partners intervened to assist the authorities in managing the situation and, in particular, in improving reception conditions.
- Several EU member States offered places to Syrian refugees under either the Humanitarian Admissions Programme (HAP) or the enhanced resettlement programme.
- Following the dramatic loss of life of more than 300 people who drowned off the coast of Lampedusa in October, UNHCR developed a *Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative*, which includes measures to be taken within the European Union, and countries of transit, first asylum and origin. The European Union

established a Task Force for the Mediterranean, which drew upon UNHCR’s recommendations in developing its lines of action.

- Lithuania acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in 2013.

### People of concern to UNHCR in Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe | 2013



# | Results in 2013 |

## Working environment

The European Union's 28 member States registered 398,200 asylum claims in 2013, 32 per cent more than in 2012. Together, these States accounted for 82 per cent of all asylum claims in Europe.

Most asylum-seekers in Europe came from the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), with 49,000 new applications lodged in the European Union. Applications by Syrians were highest in Sweden and Germany. Other main countries of origin included Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation and Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)).

A reception capacity crisis in Bulgaria led UNHCR to deploy emergency support to Bulgaria, together with several partners, including the European Commission (EC), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF).

Access to territory for people in need of international protection remained a concern in Europe, including reports of “push-backs”. To address this, UNHCR continued its strategic engagement with States, and other key partners, including EASO, the European Commission, FRONTEX, and civil society organizations, particularly the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

## Achievements and impact

In June, the European Union adopted the recast Common European Asylum System (CEAS), resulting in a comprehensive set of standards for reception and asylum in Europe. In line with UNHCR's supervisory responsibility, reflected in EU law, the Office had provided expert opinion on the development of CEAS, including a general reference on the 1951 Convention and another on UNHCR's role in the asylum *acquis*.

In 2013, UNHCR finalized the Credibility Assessment in EU Asylum Systems (CREDO) project. Hailed as ground-breaking in scope, it examined credibility assessments and laid the foundation for training and further research. The organization continued its judicial engagement activities, with interventions in 10 national and European court cases on issues of concern to UNHCR under its mandate.

UNHCR promoted global resettlement priorities with States and key stakeholders. The European Resettlement Network, funded by the new emergency resettlement project, was developed and its visibility increased. An updated mapping of existing EU member State practices strengthened support for family reunification, with the development of country fact sheets and questionnaires explaining the type of support available.

Publication of the “Indicators of Refugee Integration: Evidence from Central Europe” and the study “A New Beginning – Refugee Integration in Europe”, as part of the Refugee Integration Capacity and Evaluation (RICE) project, ensured that UNHCR strengthened its support and advocacy for refugee integration.

Awareness of statelessness increased and advocacy to address statelessness continued, as UNHCR promoted accession to the two UN Conventions; carried out national studies in Malta, in the Nordic and Baltic States; lobbied for safeguards against statelessness in nationality legislation; supported the development of statelessness determination procedures in parts of Europe, such as the United Kingdom; and strengthened its relations with partners such as the European Network on Statelessness.

Xenophobia and racism targeting asylum-seekers and refugees were observed. Political and public pressure on policy makers to limit irregular migration, and a limited perception of the distinction between asylum-seekers, refugees and irregular migrants, exacerbated such intolerance.

Significant contributions, including the publication of “Too Much Pain – A Statistical Overview of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Asylum in the European Union”, raised awareness among interlocutors of FGM and improved the protection of survivors, with the aim of prevention of the practice.

## Constraints

The region remained stable, with no major security concerns or political upheavals. The crisis in Syria coupled with the economic environment, negative press and political rhetoric about irregular migrants, affected the protection and integration in the subregion of people of concern to UNHCR.

The situation in Bulgaria highlighted the need for contingency planning and emergency preparedness in the event of a sudden influx of asylum-seekers.

## Operations

**Austria** agreed to accept 500 Syrian refugees under its Humanitarian Admission programme.

In the **Baltic States**, UNHCR's engagement centred around access to territory and detention practices. In **Estonia**, court decisions helped promote the non-penalization provisions of the 1951 Convention, and standards for unaccompanied and separated children improved. **Latvia** committed to improving decision-making mechanisms and simplified the procedure for children born to “non-citizens” to acquire Latvian

citizenship at birth. In **Lithuania**, accession to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness marked an important step towards preventing and reducing statelessness.

In **Belgium**, the first-instance eligibility body developed a Quality Initiative Project, as advocated by UNHCR. The organization's CREDO project facilitated better understanding of credibility assessments.

**Bulgaria** experienced a significant increase in asylum applicants, particularly those fleeing the Syrian crisis. As of November, reception capacity was completely overstretched, and asylum-seekers lacked access to adequate accommodation or basic services.

In **Cyprus**, efforts focused on ensuring access to asylum procedures, identifying and assisting people with specific needs, and advocating with respect to law and policy development.

In the **Czech Republic**, discussions between UNHCR and the Directorate of the Alien Police regarding a formal joint monitoring mechanism enabled the participation of police representatives in a summer school training session on protection-sensitive border management.

**Denmark** achieved notable progress in adjudication and court practices for Syrian refugees and those fearing persecution on the basis of sexual orientation. Denmark allowed asylum-seekers to move out of the reception centre and seek employment after six months in the country.

**Finland** continued to engage in age, gender and diversity mainstreaming and to ensure the participation of asylum-seekers and refugees in the identification of needs and programme development. Finland also expanded its resettlement quota in order to accommodate more Syrian refugees in 2014 and worked with municipalities to share good practices and ensure timely placements.

**France** extensively reviewed its asylum system, and its first-instance eligibility body signed a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR to promote quality in the system. The RICE project increased understanding of refugees' integration.

**Germany** increased its humanitarian assistance programme for Syrian refugees from 5,000 to 10,000. New legislation was also adopted to implement the EU Qualification Directive, which resulted in major improvements in the granting of status.

In **Greece**, UNHCR's focus remained on supporting the newly established asylum system, including clearing the appeal backlog. It supported the First Reception Service, deployed teams to select border locations and helped launch operations in the main reception centre, as well as through mobile units on three islands. UNHCR enhanced border-monitoring capacity and documented cases of alleged "push-backs" or ill treatment by

the coastguards, and carried out advocacy with the Government in this respect.

In **Hungary**, amendments to the refugee law entered into force in July 2013. These changes provide legal guarantees and procedural safeguards in relation to the detention of asylum-seekers. Their implementation, however, has remained problematic, primarily due to differing interpretations of the grounds for detaining asylum-seekers and the lack of individual assessment, including for asylum-seekers with specific needs.

In **Iceland**, a reform to improve the quality and efficiency of the asylum system was underway, guided by UNHCR. Progress was made in acceding to the two UN Statelessness Conventions and establishing a statelessness determination procedure.

In **Ireland**, a new subsidiary protection procedure was introduced to clear the backlog of cases and to enhance the system. The RICE project facilitated dialogue with refugees and led to recommendations for strengthening integration.

In **Italy**, UNHCR participated in 15 eligibility commissions and helped to improve the quality of decisions. UNHCR interventions on the reception of arrivals at sea and the provision of information to them focused on best practices. The Government decided to increase the capacity of reception centres from 3,000 to 20,000, with further expansion if required. The organization's media and public information activities contributed to the debate on asylum and migration: interest in arrivals by sea peaked with the tragic events that occurred in Lampedusa in October.

In **Malta**, the Government maintained its policy of detention for all people irregularly entering the country, but continued to promote improvement in reception conditions and to facilitate durable solutions. UNHCR issued a Position on Detention in Malta, which was shared with the authorities. The Prime Minister launched a national review of detention policy following the death of a detainee attempting to flee a detention centre.

In the **Netherlands**, there were improvements in family reunification following UNHCR advocacy. The organization participated in an evaluation of the eight-day asylum procedure. The Independent Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs, in advice to the Dutch Government on statelessness, echoed UNHCR's recommendations made in its 2011 mapping exercise.

In **Norway**, 500 additional resettlement places were made available for Syrian refugees and steps were taken to improve the determination of asylum claims.

In **Poland**, UNHCR advocated successfully for amendments to the new Act on Foreigners, in order to incorporate alternatives to detention, including for asylum-seekers. The "Response to Vulnerability in Asylum Procedures" helped sensitize the Office



for Foreigners (OFF) about existing gaps in assessing and supporting asylum-seekers with specific needs. Among efforts to address these gaps, the OFF designed operational mechanisms to identify trafficking victims among asylum-seekers and to direct them towards appropriate and safe shelters.

In **Portugal**, the Portuguese Refugee Council provided legal assistance and advice to asylum-seekers, including support for the local integration of recognized refugees. In 2013, 18 refugees were resettled to Portugal.

In **Romania**, advocacy by UNHCR and other partners, led to legislative amendments that facilitated the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, particularly the lifting of the obligation to reimburse financial benefits provided to them under the national integration plan.

In **Slovakia**, the *Act on Asylum* was amended, introducing positive changes in three areas: a) to determine membership of a particular social group, the Act now requires consideration of gender aspects, including gender identity; b) protection against serious harm in the country of origin needs to be effective and not only temporary, and the applicant needs to have access to such protection; and c) the extension of the length of residence permit for those granted subsidiary protection was changed from one to two years.

In **Slovenia**, alternatives to detention were gradually introduced to the domestic legal framework. UNHCR advocacy led to the amendment of the country's International Protection Act to mainstream the protection of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into the national child protection system. Moreover, the definition of vulnerable people was broadened by these amendments to include victims of human trafficking and people with mental health disorders.

In 2013, the recognition rate in **Spain** was 19 per cent, similar to the previous two years, but lower than the EU average, which stood at around 30 per cent. UNHCR efforts, including interventions in several Supreme Court

decisions, saw convention refugee status granted more often than subsidiary protection. Procedural standards and the quality of decisions – particularly as they pertain to children; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals, and victims of torture – were equally improved.

**Sweden** assumed chairmanship of the Core Group on the Resettlement of Syrian refugees and adopted a position entitling all Syrian beneficiaries of international protection to permanent residence and family reunification. As part of Sweden's commitment to quality and training, more tools and guidelines were developed – including credibility assessments, checklists for quality assurance in child asylum claims, and safeguards in the adjudication of sexual orientation and gender identity claims.

**Switzerland** adopted a three-year pilot resettlement programme and invited UNHCR both to carry out a quality project and to participate in an advisory group linked to evaluations of the pilot for a new asylum system. Participatory assessment with refugees was promoted and a project on integration commenced.

In the **United Kingdom**, the joint Home Office/UNHCR Quality Integration Project published findings on family asylum claims and applications of the “best interest of the child” principle. The organization advised the Home Office as it drafted the statelessness determination procedure, adopted in April 2013, and during its implementation.

Throughout the region, the European Commission and EASO were assigned the task of providing guidance and support to facilitate harmonization of asylum systems and practices in member States in line with the CEAS' new standards. UNHCR continued to work closely with both institutions and member States, to follow up on the transposition and implementation of the CEAS standards, which, according to Article 78 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, must be in accordance with the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

## | Financial information |

UNHCR's initial financial requirements for 2013 in the subregion increased to USD 63.3 million, compared to USD 54.6 million at the end of 2012, in order to address the emergency in Bulgaria.

In 2013, funding for the subregion allowed for expenditure of USD 50 million, 79 per cent of the total required.

### Budget and expenditure in Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe | USD

Operation		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	Total
<b>Belgium Regional Office<sup>1</sup></b>	Budget	12,892,458	1,710,837	<b>14,603,295</b>
	Expenditure	11,215,274	1,404,218	<b>12,619,492</b>
<b>Hungary Regional Office<sup>2</sup></b>	Budget	13,105,174	1,389,143	<b>14,494,317</b>
	Expenditure	9,278,196	1,066,159	<b>10,344,354</b>
<b>Italy Regional Office<sup>3</sup></b>	Budget	21,518,182	210,702	<b>21,728,884</b>
	Expenditure	18,759,704	114,120	<b>18,873,824</b>
<b>Spain</b>	Budget	1,958,882	32,841	<b>1,991,722</b>
	Expenditure	1,958,882	32,841	<b>1,991,722</b>
<b>Sweden Regional Office<sup>4</sup></b>	Budget	2,600,966	773,066	<b>3,374,032</b>
	Expenditure	1,749,357	614,188	<b>2,363,545</b>
<b>Regional Activities</b>	Budget	7,076,939	0	<b>7,076,939</b>
	Expenditure	3,840,176	0	<b>3,840,176</b>
<b>Total budget</b>		<b>59,152,601</b>	<b>4,116,589</b>	<b>63,269,190</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>46,801,588</b>	<b>3,231,526</b>	<b>50,033,114</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes activities in Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Liaison Office in Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> Includes activities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>3</sup> Includes activities in Albania, Cyprus, Greece, and Malta.

<sup>4</sup> Includes activities in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Norway.

## Voluntary contributions to Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe | USD

Earmarking / Donor	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	All pillars	Total
<b>BELGIUM REGIONAL OFFICE</b>				
Austria	196,871		35,064	<b>231,935</b>
Belgium	91,609			<b>91,609</b>
European Union	21,753			<b>21,753</b>
France	767,834			<b>767,834</b>
Ireland	60,576			<b>60,576</b>
Private donors in the Netherlands	187,668			<b>187,668</b>
UN Fund for Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict	9,940			<b>9,940</b>
United Kingdom	296,899			<b>296,899</b>
<b>BELGIUM REGIONAL OFFICE Total</b>	<b>1,633,149</b>		<b>35,064</b>	<b>1,668,213</b>
<b>ITALY REGIONAL OFFICE</b>				
European Union	6,957,694			<b>6,957,694</b>
International Organization for Migration	41,672			<b>41,672</b>
Italy	2,087,217		180,000	<b>2,267,217</b>
Malta	51,656			<b>51,656</b>
Private donors in Germany		135,685		<b>135,685</b>
Private donors in Greece	76,628			<b>76,628</b>
United Kingdom	369,767			<b>369,767</b>
<b>ITALY REGIONAL OFFICE Total</b>	<b>9,584,634</b>	<b>135,685</b>	<b>180,000</b>	<b>9,900,319</b>
<b>SPAIN</b>				
Private donors in Spain	6,468			<b>6,468</b>
Spain	503,685		499,455	<b>1,003,140</b>
<b>SPAIN Total</b>	<b>510,154</b>		<b>499,455</b>	<b>1,009,609</b>
<b>SWEDEN REGIONAL OFFICE</b>				
Russian Federation			250,000	<b>250,000</b>
<b>SWEDEN REGIONAL OFFICE Total</b>			<b>250,000</b>	<b>250,000</b>
<b>HUNGARY REGIONAL OFFICE</b>				
Czech Republic			26,665	<b>26,665</b>
European Union	1,419,790			<b>1,419,790</b>
Hungary			194,854	<b>194,854</b>
Poland			69,100	<b>69,100</b>
Private donors in the Czech Republic			1,337	<b>1,337</b>
Romania			131,665	<b>131,665</b>
United States of America	721,400			<b>721,400</b>
<b>HUNGARY REGIONAL OFFICE Total</b>	<b>2,141,190</b>		<b>423,620</b>	<b>2,564,810</b>
<b>REGIONAL ACTIVITIES</b>				
Austria			11,688	<b>11,688</b>
European Union	1,783,619			<b>1,783,619</b>
<b>REGIONAL ACTIVITIES Total</b>	<b>1,783,619</b>		<b>11,688</b>	<b>1,795,307</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,652,745</b>	<b>135,685</b>	<b>1,399,827</b>	<b>17,188,257</b>

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)