

Joint Action for Refugee Protection

Border monitoring projects are based on agreements between UNHCR, State Border Authorities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Activities under these agreements aim at monitoring the entry of persons in need of protection to the territory of the State and their access to the asylum procedures, as well as their protection against refoulement.

The first agreement was concluded in Hungary in December 2006, followed by similar arrangements in

- Slovakia – September 2007-2009;
- Romania – July 2008;
- Slovenia – October 2008;
- Poland – October 2009;
- Bulgaria – April 2010.
- UNHCR in the Czech Republic focuses on monitoring the asylum procedure at the Prague airport through its NGO implementing partner.

Good Practices

The joint monitoring activities have significantly strengthened the co-operation and partnership between Government, NGOs, and UNHCR.

NGO staff regularly visit border areas with full access to foreigners, border police staff and detention facilities, as well as statistics, and case files. Following the border visits, the staff prepare reports and issues are taken up in regular working group meetings.

The activities under this framework have helped to increase mutual understanding and transparency through enhanced access to asylum procedures, identified training needs, proposed changes in existing laws particularly on non-penalization of entry, non-refoulement, and the cooperation between border police and immigration/asylum authorities.

Access to information is ensured through advocacy measures and placement of publications with relevant protection information at border checkpoints and in detention facilities.

For more information, please visit the Refugee Protection /Access to territory pages on our website:

<http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org>



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Refugees
at the
Border

Refugees at the border

An individual who is persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political asylum has the right to seek asylum in a safe country. To enjoy this right and to be able to present his/her case to the authorities, the person has to obtain access to the territory of a safe country. (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951)

Refugees fleeing from conflicts or persecution are in a vulnerable situation. They have no protection from their State. If other countries do not allow them access to their territory or send them back to where they could be persecuted, they may be condemning them to an intolerable life without rights, torture, or even to death.

The principle of non-refoulement, which means the protection of refugees from being returned to places where their lives or freedom could be threatened, is one of the cornerstones of refugee protection.



UNHCR's Mandate and Goals in the Region

UNHCR leads and coordinates international action for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. The Organisation also takes responsibility for stateless persons and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

UNHCR safeguards the rights and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers by supervising the implementation of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and by ensuring that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum, to find refuge in another State and to return home voluntarily.

In Central Europe, UNHCR works to ensure

- that asylum seekers can obtain access to the territory and asylum procedures;
- that their status is determined by fair and efficient asylum procedures;
- and that their living conditions are in line with international standards.

It also promotes durable solutions for refugee problems: through local integration, resettlement to third countries, and voluntary repatriation of refugees.

Access to the territory

Access to territory and to asylum procedures remains a key of refugee protection. States have the right and the obligation to manage their borders in a responsible manner and to define their migration policies. While doing so, states also have to provide protection to those in need according to international law.

UNHCR in Central Europe has developed, in close cooperation with State Authorities and NGOs, a framework, which is supporting border management policies and practices ensuring that people seeking asylum can secure access to territory and procedures in which their claims can be determined, and effective protection provided to those who are entitled to it.

