

Andorra  
Austria  
Belgium  
Cyprus  
Denmark  
Finland  
France  
Germany  
Greece  
Holy See  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Italy  
Liechtenstein  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
Monaco  
Netherlands  
Norway  
Portugal  
San Marino  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom

## Western Europe

### Operational highlights

- The number of asylum applications in Western European countries, except for Greece, declined. There were more asylum applications from Iraqis than in previous years. Malta had the highest number of asylum applications in the region, followed by France, Greece and Sweden. In a number of countries, including Denmark, Finland, Greece, Norway, Portugal and Sweden, UNHCR participated in the process of developing national asylum laws, ensuring that the criteria of the European Union Qualification Directive on Asylum were met. One result of this process was a new immigration law in Germany which raised the possibility of local integration for people without firm legal status.
- UNHCR built relationships with the authorities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Italy and Spain to better identify people of concern within mixed groups of migrants. The Office supported the development of improved screening mechanisms, as well as translation services in Italian and Spanish



ports, to help identify those in need of international protection.

- UNHCR worked with the Greek authorities to address the increase in the number of asylum-seekers arriving in the country, more than 20,000 in 2007. With financial support from the EU, the Office strengthened monitoring and counselling on four Aegean islands receiving steady migratory flows.
- UNHCR provided country of origin information, eligibility guidelines, return advisories and analyses to several governments. UNHCR's advocacy contributed to a positive decision by the Government of the Netherlands to halt the return of Afghans to their places of origin, which UNHCR considers unsafe. Similar efforts halted revocation procedures for Iraqis in Germany.
- France and Portugal became resettlement countries, with annual quotas of 30 and 100 cases, respectively. UNHCR resettled 12 refugees from Malta to Portugal, and referred another 261 to the United States. The Netherlands is encouraging Belgium and Luxembourg to introduce resettlement programmes, which resulted in a joint visit to Thailand to examine resettlement options. Nordic countries, particularly Norway, continued to provide resettlement as a protection solution, including emergency-resettlement.

## Working environment

Some traditional refugee receiving countries in Western Europe recorded the lowest numbers of new asylum applications in years or even decades (e.g. Germany, France, and the United Kingdom). At the same time, both southern Europe and the Nordic countries recorded strong increases in 2007 in comparison with the previous year. Close to 63,000 individuals applied for international protection in southern Europe alone, compared to some 38,800 in 2006, with the largest numbers being recorded in Greece (25,100) and Italy (14,000). The Nordic countries, on the other hand, registered more than 46,400 new asylum-seekers, 37 per cent more than during 2006. Sweden was by far the main destination of asylum-seekers (36,200 claims) with on average four out of five applications in the Nordic region being lodged in that country.

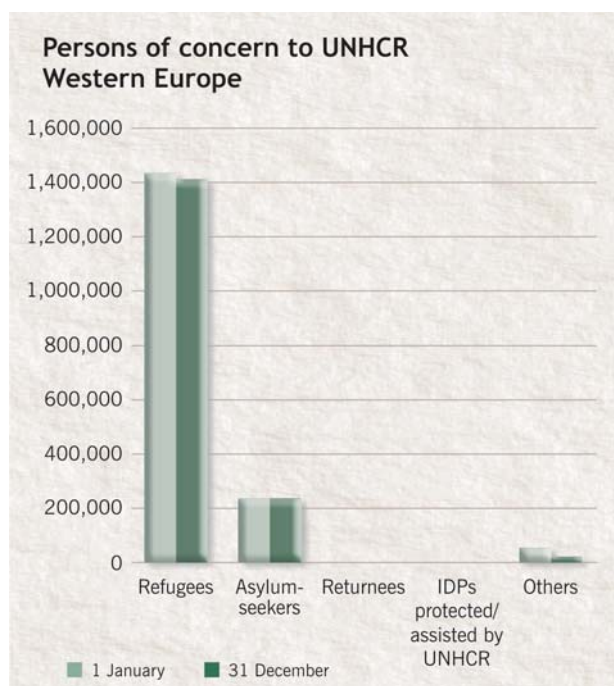
For a few countries in southern Europe, notably Greece and Malta, the number of asylum-seekers in 2007 was the highest ever. This situation in Greece poses a particular challenge for its asylum system, highlighting also the increasing pressure on the periphery of the EU borders.

Arrivals of asylum-seekers by sea continued in 2007 amidst much media attention to the human suffering caused by the precarious methods resorted to in crossing the Mediterranean Sea. However, most asylum applications in Western Europe are launched at airports or in country capitals.

In advocacy terms, the office focused particularly on the situation of Iraqi refugees in the EU, raising awareness of and concern about the widely-divergent recognition rates. For example, as of December 2007, Sweden had registered more than 18,000 Iraqi asylum seekers, spurring the Government's emphasis on returns.

In light of the emerging common EU asylum system, UNHCR endeavored to ensure its substantive input into this evolving regional legal protection framework, with a view to upholding respect for international norms.

The policy environment in Western Europe is increasingly vast and complex, within which UNHCR must engage at differing levels and in broader subjects that may only touch upon the subjects of direct concern to the Office but nevertheless have an impact on the level of protection afforded to refugees and asylum-seekers in the region. UNHCR maintains key engagements with EU Institutions, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security in Europe (OSCE), the EU Border Agency (FRONTEX), Parliaments, national and international courts, the UN Country teams, NGOs, media and civil society in order to promote its positions on this broadening range of issues.



## Achievements and impact

### Access

UNHCR expanded its operational partnerships with national authorities. The Office undertook monitoring missions at entry points in Italy, Greece, Malta and Spain to witness the first instance of asylum claims. UNHCR assisted at airports of countries where access by asylum-seekers to territory beyond the airport is restricted. In Belgium, a new asylum procedure was instituted in June 2007 which allowed UNHCR to visit the detention centre for people arriving at air and sea ports.

### Procedure, recognition and groups

UNHCR continued to be represented in a number of European asylum systems. In Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland the Office received government funds to advise and monitor refugee status determination (RSD) procedures. The Office's advocacy persuaded Germany, Spain and other countries to recognize gender-related persecution as a valid reason to seek protection in another country. In the United Kingdom, a number of positive initiatives within the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) should lead to more informed decision-making in the first instance.

In the Netherlands, UNHCR sponsored a study on detention pertaining to the country's accelerated RSD procedures as applied at the airport in Amsterdam.

### Durable solutions

In response to UNHCR's advocacy, the United Kingdom met its target to resettle more than 500 refugees. In late 2007, the Government of the United Kingdom agreed to consider resettlement of some 550 refugees from the Middle East in late 2007. This number includes some 350 former staff and their relatives, who are facing risks of persecution as a result of their affiliation to operations in Iraq.

The Government of Ireland maintained its commitment to an annual resettlement quota of 200 cases and promoted the use of resettlement as a responsibility-sharing mechanism in the EU context.

UNHCR was able to add more resettlement countries to its list in 2007. Portugal became a resettlement country with an initial quota of 30 cases, and France agreed to become a resettlement country as of 2008. The Office also made progress in encouraging Belgium and Luxembourg to become resettlement countries.



UNHCR/A. Di Loreto

Asylum-seekers being transferred from the island of Lampedusa to an accommodation centre in Italy.

Italy and Spain responded positively in a number of resettlement operations, especially in the context of mixed flows of migration, admitting small groups of refugees with specific needs. For example, in November 2007 a group of 40 Eritrean refugees, mainly women and children in detention facilities, was transferred from Libya to Italy. Other countries, including France and Germany, are looking into offering this type of resettlement option.

## Constraints

Complementary partnerships help to stimulate protection in an environment that often blurs the distinction between migrants, people in need of international protection, and those seen as a threat to security. Societies often have the perspective that criminal activities increase with a rise in the number of migrants, and this perception can threaten the integrity of the asylum system. Migrants' potential to diversify the workforce and drive economic growth is overshadowed by their perceived threat to nationals' economic and social interests.

## Operations

UNHCR-conducted workshops for border officials in **Ireland** were an essential means to safeguarding access to territory.

In 2007, **Norway's** Parliament passed one of the most progressive asylum laws in Europe. The new statute, which will come into effect in January 2010, introduces a single status for Convention refugees. It also includes reference to the 1951 Refugee Convention thereby formalizing cooperation with UNHCR.

UNHCR worked closely with **Italy's** Coast Guard as well as local administrations, lawyers, interpreters and national and international NGOs to respond to the needs of asylum-seekers arriving by sea. Admissions practices improved significantly in Lampedusa and Sicily. Information leaflets, jointly produced with the Ministries of Interior, for possible asylum seekers were disseminated to boat people arriving on **Spain's** Canary Islands and third country detainees in Greece. In Greece and Spain, almost half (some 2,600) of all asylum applications were lodged at border points and the Madrid Airport.

The number of asylum applications in **Cyprus** increased by almost a third in 2007 and continues to be amongst the highest in Europe per capita. In the last few months of 2007, UNHCR's focus was on the needs of Palestinians arriving from Iraq in the northern part of the island. The Office gained the release from detention of more than 100 individuals.

In **Sweden**, the main achievement was the mobilization of NGOs across the region and the establishment of a regional NGO protection network and partnership.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Office contributed to the New Asylum Model (NAM) introduced by the Government which shows greater sensitivity to the humanitarian and protection aspects of the asylum system. The Government is considering giving UNHCR a key role in local-integration issues.

With 2,500 new recognitions in **Austria** alone, Chechens continue to be one of the largest groups of refugees in Western Europe today. UNHCR organized a participatory assessment with this group to identify a solution.

UNHCR remains present with a right to vote in **France's** new Cour de Droit d'Asile.

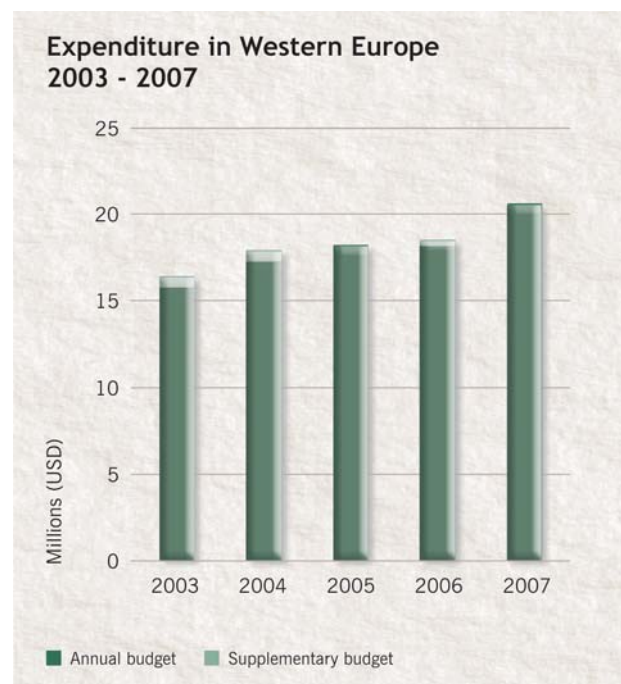
In **Greece**, in response to the substantial increase in mixed groups of migrants, the authorities strengthened border controls and arrested some 112,000 people who entered the country illegally. UNHCR worked closely with other stakeholders to address concerns, including possible refoulement, "secure deterrence" along the coast and the country's reception conditions. The Office intervened in many individual cases to advocate for the implementation of international standards.

In December 2007, in response to UNHCR's advocacy, a new detention centre meeting basic standards was opened on the Greek island of Samos. UNHCR translated excerpts of its study on the EU Qualification Directive into Greek for the authorities. Appropriate national laws have not yet been drafted. UNHCR funded a medical rehabilitation centre for torture victims, the only one of its kind in Greece.

The Office provided input for the European Commission's 2007 Green Paper on the future Common European Asylum System. In November, UNHCR issued a report entitled *Asylum in the European Union – a study on the implementation of the Qualification Directive*. Interventions with the EU during the year covered protection-sensitive issues such as entry, border management, migration, detention (particularly of children of concern to UNHCR), resettlement and statelessness.

## Financial information

UNHCR offices in Western Europe secured earmarked donations from Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland and Italy supported UNHCR by providing office space or funding offices. Nonetheless, public awareness activities as well as monitoring and partnerships for protection with NGOs were limited by resource constraints. Exchange rate losses had severe implications in the Euro zone.



## Budget and expenditure (USD)

Country	Annual budget	
	Final budget	Expenditure
Austria	1,187,139	1,044,825
Belgium	3,381,603	3,380,314
France	2,750,317	2,746,585
Germany	2,235,468	2,213,613
Greece	1,237,893	1,196,154
Ireland	687,720	658,551
Italy	4,098,157	3,691,374
Malta	55,320	49,533
Portugal	59,479	59,434
Spain	1,283,267	1,276,470
Sweden	2,122,394	2,074,688
Switzerland	717,337	661,876
United Kingdom	1,688,403	1,683,052
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,504,496</b>	<b>20,736,467</b>

## Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)

Earmarking	Donor	Annual budget
Western Europe	United States	1,300,000
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1,300,000</b>
Austria	Austria	60,017
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>60,017</b>
Belgium	Belgium	130,921
	Netherlands	13,158
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>144,079</b>
France	Council of Europe Development Bank	1,875
	France	534,428
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>536,303</b>
Germany	Germany	518,807
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>518,807</b>
Ireland	Ireland	150,525
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>150,525</b>
Italy	Italy	1,106,048
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1,106,048</b>
Spain	Spain	486,805
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>486,805</b>
Sweden	Denmark	38,272
	Finland	13,191
	Russian Federation	120,000
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>171,463</b>	
Switzerland	Switzerland	114,356
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>114,356</b>
United Kingdom	United Kingdom	449,902
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>449,902</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,038,306</b>

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against the "New or additional activities - mandate related" (NAM) Reserve.