

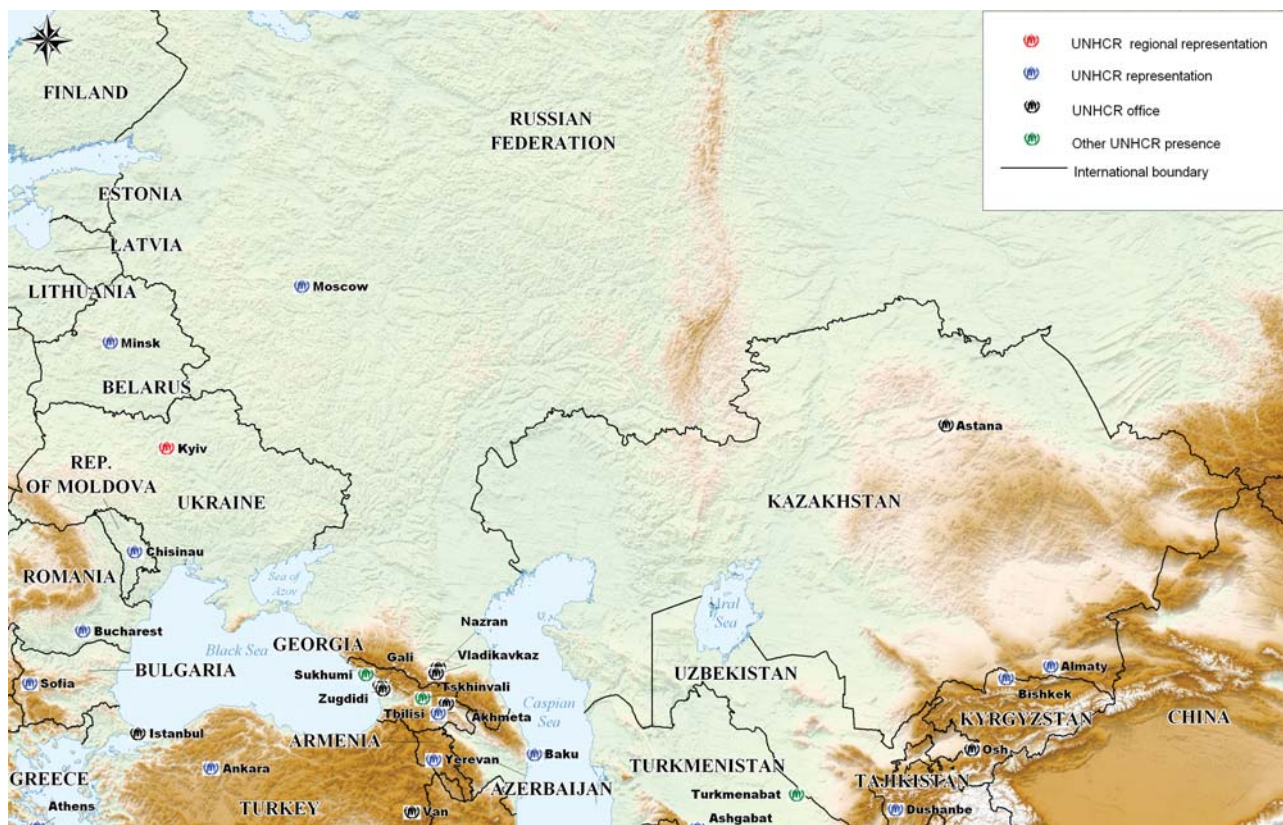


Eastern Europe

Operational highlights

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Georgia
Moldova
Russian Federation
Ukraine

- The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) helped UNHCR address the winter needs of refugees and IDP families in Armenia and Georgia.
- Eastern Europe made progress in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Safe houses and hotlines were established in Georgia and Azerbaijan. UNHCR cooperated with the national authorities to distribute information booklets in local languages.
- The EU funded the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project for the Southern Caucasus to develop a coherent approach to asylum and migration in the region.



- The Russian Federation strengthened its asylum regime by allowing unfettered access to national asylum procedures and providing immediate documentation to every asylum applicant. Law enforcement officials now recognize such documents as legitimate proof of residence and, moreover, as work permits.
- In June 2007, UNHCR adopted the 10-Point Plan of Action for Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration for Countries along the Eastern and South Eastern Borders of European Union Member States. The Plan is a platform for dialogue between UNHCR and the Governments of Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. It also defines UNHCR's cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and NGOs in the region.
- UNHCR conducted a study, "Local Integration of Refugees in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine – A Strategy for Action" at the request of these countries' governments. The next step will be to prioritize the study's recommendations and raise funds for their implementation.

Working Environment

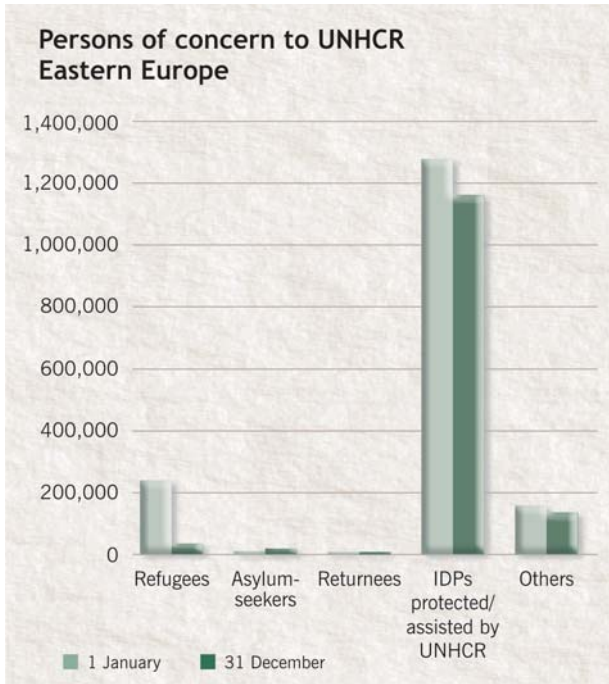
The Eastern European countries covered in this subregional chapter recorded strong economic growth in 2007. This provided more resources to address the specific protection needs of asylum-seekers and refugees.

Nine new States entered the Schengen zone in December 2007, including five that border Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Though many people in transit are economic migrants, some are in need of international protection.

In the countries bordering the European Union (EU), structures and procedures through which protection can be provided are both new and fragile. With resettlement opportunities limited and local integration made difficult by language, employment and legislative barriers, many refugees have difficulties in finding a durable solution.

Yet, given the recent economic upswing, these Eastern European countries are drawing more economic migrants. In response, governments are more aggressively preventing undocumented workers from taking up jobs. The restrictions also affect refugees, asylum-seekers and people with temporary protection status who are trying to meet their basic needs while in exile.

In 2007, there was no progress in resolving the conflicts in the sub-region, such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia. In Ingushetia, the Russian Federation, security incidents in March 2007 led to the closure of UN offices. The Government of the Russian Federation did not approve UNHCR's plan to have a presence in Grozny, Chechnya. As a result, UNHCR had to rely increasingly on its implementing partners.



More than 700 Iraqis of Armenian ethnicity arrived in Armenia since the conflict in Iraq began. Most were granted temporary protection status. The CERF provided funds to support the new arrivals during the winter months.

Achievements and impact

UNHCR strengthened its partnerships with State authorities in charge of asylum, both at the bilateral level and through sub-regional cooperation within the Söderköping Process (the Cross-Border Cooperation Process) in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

The Office cooperated with IOM to improve border monitoring. This helped protect asylum-seekers within broader migratory movements, as outlined by UNHCR's Agenda for Protection. The cooperation extended legal counseling to stranded migrants, assisted voluntary return, improved living conditions in border facilities, and upheld the human rights of stranded migrants and asylum-seekers in accordance with international standards.

A joint IOM-UNHCR project trained implementing partners to identify individuals who might need international protection. Meanwhile, the Office's NGO partners have been instructed on how to identify victims of trafficking.

The Office has strengthened its strategic partnership with the EU, including through EC capacity-building programmes and the Söderköping Process. The



UNHCR - FRR/iv/N. Protapchuk

Refugee children temporarily housed in an accommodation centre in Odessa.

Söderköping Process, which was launched in May 2001, aims to respond to the challenge of EU enlargement eastwards and to promote cooperation on asylum and migration issues among countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It facilitates knowledge-sharing between recently acceded EU Member States and Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine which improves these States' ability to respond to asylum and migration trends.

The Government of Azerbaijan began an ambitious programme to generate more employment and provide improved shelter for people displaced by the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Government was able to close the tented camps which had hosted some 20 per cent of Azerbaijan's IDP population for the last several years.

Azerbaijan and Georgia were selected to receive funds for special projects to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. These projects raised awareness of domestic violence and the risks inherent in early marriage. Safe houses were established and a hotline was made available to respond to urgent questions.

CERF funds ensured that 500 Iraqi refugee families in Armenia received support for the winter months. The most vulnerable received winter clothing, help with heating expenses, food and medical assistance. Those with specific needs were provided with basic medicine, extra heaters and blankets.

Reconstruction programmes in Chechen cities, funded by the humanitarian community and the Government of the Russian Federation, permitted many displaced families to return to their places of origin. UNHCR's legal counselling centres provided legal advice and lawyers who helped to build trust in the judicial system.

Constraints

Building asylum systems in line with international standards requires sustained UNHCR engagement. In most countries in the region, legislative changes, political election cycles or staffing changes caused numerous delays in the pursuit of UNHCR's objectives. Many countries did not pass key legislation despite years of drafting and deliberation.

While economic growth was recorded in most countries in Eastern Europe, it was often accompanied by inflation and unfavorable exchange rates. This affected UNHCR's ability to provide assistance, even if it was provided in local currency.

Xenophobic trends increased in some Eastern European countries, particularly in Ukraine. The number of reports to UNHCR from people of concern as well as from partner NGOs regarding racially motivated incidents,

beatings, murders and other displays of xenophobia increased significantly. Comprehensive official statistics are not available, as most victims are reluctant to report incidents to the police. On the positive side, the number of racially motivated attacks in the Russian Federation fell for the second consecutive year, to only three reported cases.

Operations

UNHCR's operations in **Georgia** and **the Russian Federation** are described in separate chapters.

In **Armenia**, more than 500 Iraqi refugee families received food, winter clothing, medication and heating to help them through the winter. More than 4,900 refugees and naturalized former refugees living in communal centres received material and social assistance. UNHCR helped the Government to collect data on HIV and AIDS through a national census which also sought information on refugees.

UNHCR rehabilitated the temporary accommodation centre. Border officials were trained to improve the referral mechanism for individuals in need of international protection. The Office supported the construction of a school in a remote area to promote local integration.

In **Azerbaijan**, UNHCR provided basic monthly assistance to nearly 3,000 refugees, asylum-seekers and other people of concern. An age, gender and diversity exercise was undertaken among the IDP settlements in rural and urban areas. The result highlighted that early marriages are a significant protection concern, as these arrangements often lead to sexual and gender-based violence. More than 35,000 IDP and refugee children benefited from UNHCR's **ninemillion.org** campaign. A hotline and safe house were established to respond to the urgent information or safety needs of people experiencing violence or exploitation. UNHCR remains the focal point within the UN Country Team for IDPs and the return planning process for returns.

UNHCR's monitoring and advisory role in **Belarus** helped to ensure that international protection standards were observed and that Belarus's national asylum system was improved. The Office assisted and protected some 400 individuals and helped to refine refugee-related legislation. Reception conditions for refugees and asylum-seekers were improved by the establishment of a temporary accommodation centre in Gomel.

In **Moldova**, the Government improved refugee legislation. The challenge is now its implementation with a view to strengthen the institution of asylum.

Almost all asylum-seekers were registered and had access to free legal aid and representation through UNHCR partners. In addition, UNHCR assisted people of concern in difficult socioeconomic situations. More than 70 people were housed in the temporary accommodation centre and provided with basic assistance.

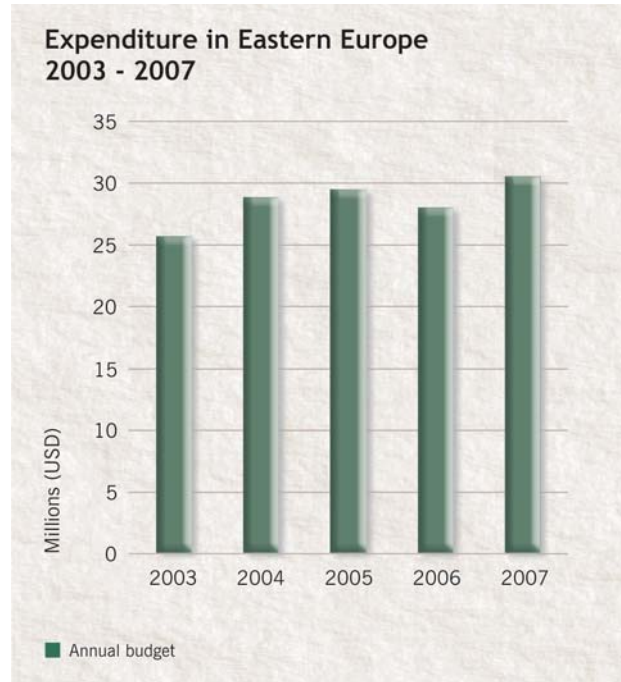
Training of the judiciary, police, lawyers and other staff dealing with refugees raised the Government's expertise in the field of asylum. UNHCR joined with the Refugee Directorate of the Ministry of Interior and the Bureau for Migration and Asylum to launch a "quality initiative" to improve refugee status determination (RSD) procedures. Planned monitoring at the Romanian border was not undertaken in 2007 due to a shortage of funds.

In **Ukraine**, the central asylum authorities were reorganized for the eighth time in a decade, interrupting asylum procedures for nearly nine months. UNHCR responded to crucial gaps by training and supporting an NGO network which provided free legal services, as well as social, medical and material assistance, to people of concern. UNHCR and its partners intervened with the authorities on protection cases when necessary. They also identified people eligible for assistance, with special requirements, or in need of resettlement. Additional staff helped strengthen border monitoring.

Resettlement continued to be the most viable solution for some refugees in Ukraine, and UNHCR successfully facilitated the departure of 79 individuals from the country in 2007. Meanwhile, 12 refugees were helped to repatriate voluntarily.

Financial information

UNHCR's budget for Eastern Europe has remained constant for several years. However, additional contributions in 2007 allowed the Office to address the needs of persons affected by HIV and AIDS and prevent and reduce sexual and gender-based violence. The Office also strengthened national capacity in the Southern Caucasus, gave assistance to refugees and IDPs in Armenia and Georgia during the winter, and addressed livelihood concerns among the displaced in Georgia.



Budget and expenditure (USD)		
Country	Annual budget	
	Final budget	Expenditure
Armenia	2,004,825	1,940,403
Azerbaijan	3,649,608	3,586,091
Belarus	1,623,828	1,619,547
Georgia	5,661,406	5,433,901
Moldova	655,977	652,323
Russian Federation	13,623,688	13,173,334
Ukraine	3,176,431	3,111,543
Regional activities ¹	1,227,370	945,110
Total	31,623,134	30,462,253

¹ includes activities in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, and strengthening protection capacities.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)		
Earmarking	Donor	Annual budget
Eastern Europe	European Commission	953,824
	Sweden	1,310,044
	United States	4,500,000
	Sub-total	6,763,868
Armenia	CERF	199,000
	Sub-total	199,000
Azerbaijan	European Commission	922,311
	Statoil (Azerbaijan)	100,000
	Switzerland	330,601
	United States	300,000
	Sub-total	1,652,912
Belarus	European Commission	390,016
	Norway	20,136
	Sub-total	410,151
Georgia	Australia for UNHCR	23,346
	CERF	129,127
	Council of Europe Development Bank	5,373
	European Commission	683,060
	Romania	147,493
	Statoil (Azerbaijan)	93,458
	Switzerland	495,455
	United States	46,500
	Sub-total	1,623,812
Russian Federation	Canada	169,492
	European Commission	2,391,377
	Japan	500,000
	Netherlands	864,000
	Switzerland	1,100,312
	United States	1,700,000
	Sub-total	6,725,181
Ukraine	European Commission	269,608
	Sub-total	269,608
Total		17,644,532

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