

Afghans constitute one of the largest groups of unaccompanied children who make their way to Europe.

| Working environment |

The working environment for UNHCR in Europe is extremely diverse, and activities in the region span the full range of issues and persons of concern to the organization. These vary from protecting refugees in mixed migration flows, promoting fair and efficient asylum systems and encouraging the successful resettlement of refugees, to protecting the rights of IDPs, supporting return and reintegration and working to prevent and resolve situations of statelessness.

Outreach to donors and to advocacy partners are core activities. Public and private contributors in Europe provide more than 40 per cent of UNHCR's funding annually. European institutions, scholars and activists engage consistently and energetically in the development of law and policy with respect to all aspects of forced displacement.

UNHCR's European region of operations includes 48 countries. Three regional organizations have a direct interest in UNHCR's work: the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). All European countries are States parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention, with only Turkey still maintaining a geographic reservation. The 27 EU Member States are bound by EU legislation on asylum, while countries which are candidates for EU membership strive to bring their laws and procedures in line with those of the Union.

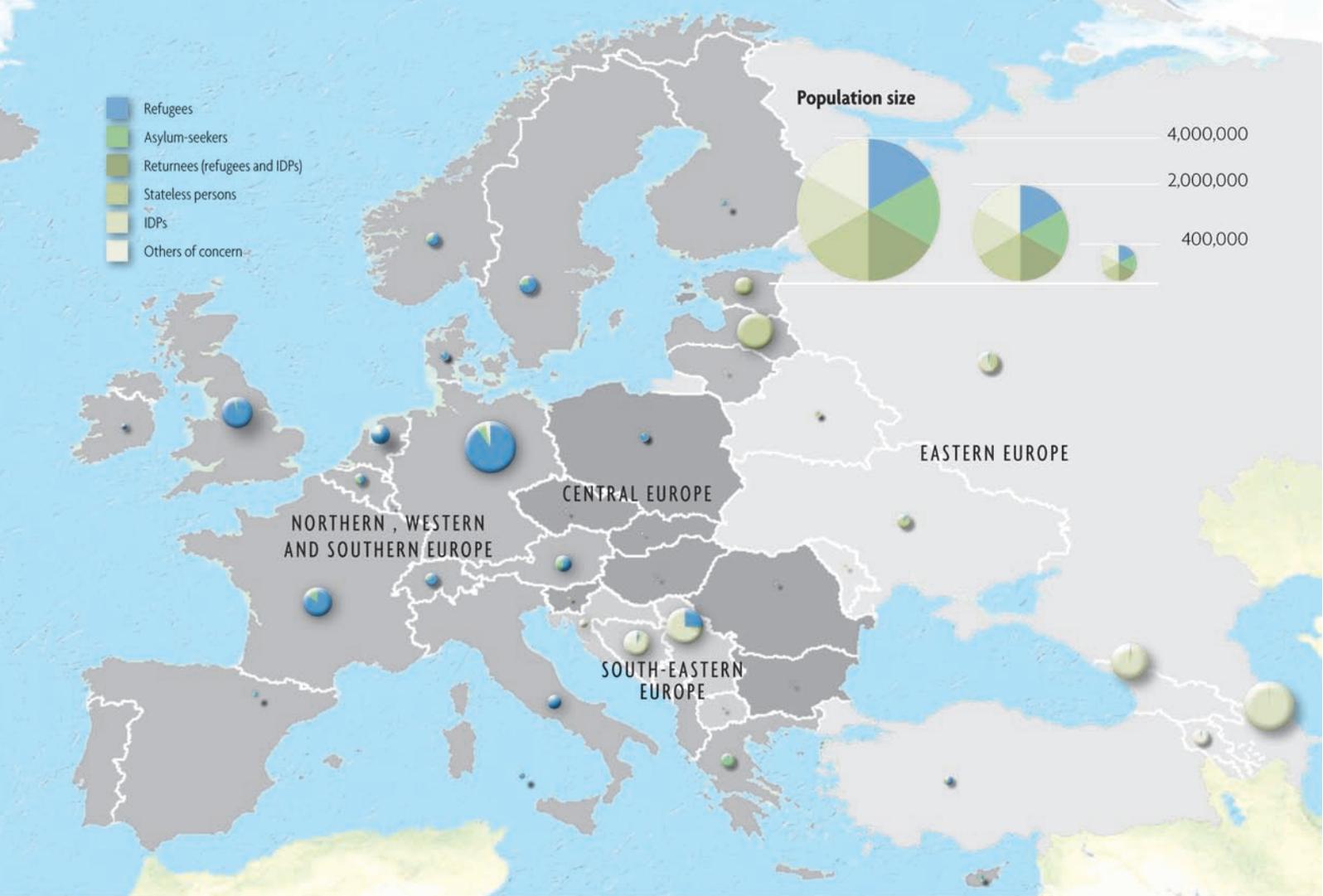
Nearly all countries in this region are also parties to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. With some 74 per cent of all asylum applications in the industrialized world lodged in countries of the EU (plus Norway and Switzerland) in 2009, the centrality of Europe to the international refugee law system cannot be underestimated.

At the same time, while Europe has in recent years faced complex issues of nationality and statelessness, mainly linked to state succession, only 32 European States have signed and ratified the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, and just 19 the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Twenty States have signed and ratified the 1997 European Convention on Nationality.

The focus of public and political debate in Europe has shifted from asylum to the control of irregular migration and security. Access to European territory as well as to asylum procedures has become more difficult and needs consistent monitoring. The incorporation of protection safeguards in migration control measures needs to be more consistent in order to prevent *refoulement*, including in the context of interception and rescue at sea. Xenophobia and racism are serious problems in some locations, affecting persons of concern to UNHCR.

EUROPE





In 2009, some 285,000 asylum applications were lodged in the 38 European countries for which UNHCR regularly publishes statistics, roughly the same number as in 2008. In the first half of 2010 there were approximately 120,000 asylum applications, somewhat less than in the same period in 2009. However, the apparent stability in numbers masks considerable shifts in flows within Europe. In 2009, some 42 per cent of applications were lodged in just four countries: France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden.

A similar picture emerges with respect to international protection. In 2009, European asylum systems recognized the international protection needs of some 98,000 persons, who thus were able to find a durable solution in their countries of asylum. However, 52 per cent of these recognitions were in just five countries.

While the asylum systems in some European countries are highly developed, in others they are still emerging and need support. Ensuring high-quality asylum procedures which reliably identify international protection needs is a priority. UNHCR works with EU partners to promote the development of the Common European Asylum System, and will collaborate with the new European Asylum Support Office to be set up in 2010. Initiatives to ensure the quality of asylum decision making,

and to build quality control mechanisms into national systems will continue.

In both South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, the number of recognized refugees is quite low, yet their successful integration remains a challenge, particularly when the refugees originate from outside the subregion. Serious integration problems also exist elsewhere in Europe, especially in Central Europe.

In South-Eastern Europe, there are still nearly 200,000 persons displaced by the conflicts of the early 1990s in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNHCR hopes that 2011, two decades after the outbreak of conflict, will mark the end of that displacement chapter. At the same time, attention needs to focus on resolving the situation of large numbers of people displaced from and within Kosovo (Serbia).

UNHCR's presence in the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation will be phased down in the course of 2011. In Georgia, UNHCR will increasingly shift to an advocacy role, in keeping with the Government's assumption of greater responsibility for direct assistance.

Strategic priorities in 2011

UNHCR's work in Europe will be oriented towards four overarching goals: (i) to ensure

respect for principles of international protection; (ii) to strengthen assistance and find durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs); (iii) to reduce or resolve instances of statelessness; and (iv) to mobilize support for the work of UNHCR and the people it serves.

○ *Ensuring respect for the principles of international protection*

Under this general goal, the main priorities will be to safeguard refugee protection space in the context of mixed migration and border management, and to ensure that asylum procedures correctly and efficiently identify people in need of international protection.

As States redouble their efforts to prevent irregular migration, access to European territory and to asylum procedures becomes more difficult for people fleeing violence and persecution. UNHCR will advocate for the incorporation of protection safeguards in migration control measures and instruments, and work to prevent *refoulement*, including in the context of interception at sea. Border monitoring will be undertaken with governmental and non-governmental partners in an effort to ensure that protection safeguards are implemented. In some locations, UNHCR and its partners will engage directly in counselling new arrivals.

Improving asylum procedures—including within the EU—remains of critical importance, as asylum outcomes lack consistency from country to country. The underlying assumption of the Common European Asylum System, including the Dublin Regulation, is that national asylum systems afford the same prospects and levels of protection. However, this is not yet the case. UNHCR will implement quality assurance activities at national and subregional levels, including through the Further Developing Quality project supported by the European Refugee Fund, in an effort to help governments ensure the quality of their procedures.

As a non-voting member of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office, due to be set up in late 2010, UNHCR will encourage this body to focus on practical cooperation to improve asylum procedures and to ensure respect for refugee rights throughout the EU. In 2011, UNHCR will devote particular attention to supporting reform of the asylum system in Greece, in view of the critical situation for asylum-seekers and refugees in that country.

Outside the EU, the level of asylum system development varies widely. UNHCR will continue its efforts to help countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe to build fair and effective asylum systems. This requires strong political will and dedicated resources from each country. Of vital

importance is the continued development of protection mechanisms in Turkey, a key transit point for refugees and asylum-seekers from many countries.

At the request of States, UNHCR will comment on proposed legislation affecting persons of concern. Furthermore, the Office will continue its judicial engagement when key international protection issues are at stake at national and regional levels. Courts in the EU are increasingly turning to the Court of Justice of the European Union for guidance on the interpretation of EU asylum law, while the European Court of Human Rights is examining many issues of central concern to UNHCR. The Office will submit third party interventions and other statements as appropriate.

○ *Strengthening assistance and durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons*

Priorities in this context include resolving protracted refugee situations in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe through voluntary repatriation and local integration, providing protection, assistance and solutions for IDPs, and promoting the integration of those receiving international protection, including resettled refugees.

UNHCR will continue to implement programmes to promote durable solutions in South-Eastern Europe, where many refugees and IDPs from the conflicts in the 1990s are still without such solutions. Large numbers live in difficult conditions and are unable or unwilling to return to their homes. The resolution of this situation is a priority, particularly in the context of the region's drive toward European integration. Together with its partners, UNHCR will redouble its efforts to bring this chapter to a close through a combination of voluntary repatriation and local integration. The Office will mobilize support for the provision of housing and livelihood opportunities, both in areas of origin and displacement.

In Eastern Europe, scarce prospects for employment, compounded by housing shortages, hostility toward foreigners and inadequate legal status and access to rights frequently hinder the self-reliance and integration of refugees. UNHCR will work to eliminate these obstacles, while providing direct support where resources permit. In Georgia, where refugee integration has progressed well and some refugees have become naturalized citizens, the handover of programmes to UNDP will proceed as planned. In other countries, UNHCR will continue to mobilize development partners and ensure that national development programmes take refugees and other displaced people into consideration.

Financial information

The comprehensive budget for Europe in 2011 is nearly USD 197 million, a decrease of almost 23 per cent compared to 2010, owing to the reductions of a number of the larger programmes. Of the operational budget in this region, about 56 per cent is foreseen for refugees, 6 per cent for stateless people, 8 per cent for reintegration activities and 30 per cent for IDPs.

With respect to internal displacement in Eastern Europe, the Governments of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Russian Federation have assumed the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting IDPs on their territory. UNHCR's programmes will complement and support these Governments' efforts.

UNHCR will continue to promote more European engagement in refugee resettlement, and will work with the European Union and individual States to expand resettlement opportunities and promote the successful integration of resettled refugees. However, the resettlement of refugees from some European countries is still needed, notably from Turkey, in view of its geographic reservation to the 1951 Convention. UNHCR will continue to assess applications for refugee status from non-Europeans in Turkey and will seek resettlement for those recognized as refugees. Additional resources provided in 2010 have enabled the Office to shorten waiting periods for applicants in Turkey, and every effort will be made in 2011 to keep pace with demands there.

○ Preventing and resolving situations of statelessness

UNHCR will seek to understand the reasons for non-accession to the statelessness Conventions, and advocate for accession in the context of the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention in 2011.

In numerous countries in Europe, UNHCR will undertake efforts in 2011 to reach a better understanding of issues relating to statelessness and how they can be tackled. Research to provide empirical information, mapping exercises, legislative analysis and participatory assessments will all be used to identify the areas where UNHCR should engage as a matter of priority.

In South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, UNHCR will continue to implement programmes to help people who are, or may be, stateless to obtain civil documentation enabling them to exercise their rights. These activities will benefit Roma and other minorities in particular.

○ Mobilizing support

UNHCR will continue to work closely with partners at national and regional levels, including EU institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the ICRC, as well as national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, and many others. By definition, asylum requires the engagement of civil society, and UNHCR will therefore cooperate with a wide range of non-governmental partners at national and local levels across Europe.

Many of UNHCR's largest governmental donors are in this region, and European governments and institutions provide strong political and moral backing for the work of UNHCR. Across Europe, UNHCR will engage with governmental and private sector donors and the wider public to promote understanding of forced displacement issues and mobilize resources for UNHCR operations worldwide.

| Challenges |

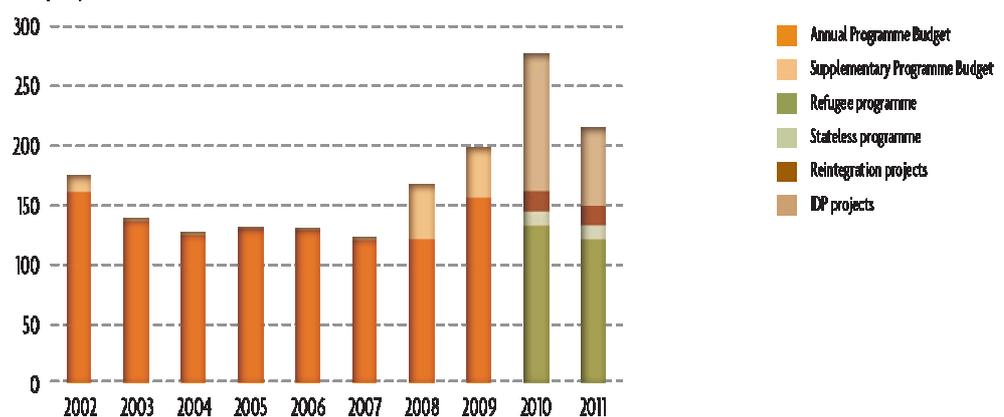
The tone of political and public discourse on asylum and migration poses a major challenge. In some contexts, protection space is threatened by overt or veiled racism and xenophobia. Public debate is often centred on questions of security, making it difficult to keep a focus on the fact that refugees are not a threat, but are people who are themselves threatened. The economic downturn and unemployment in many countries compound this challenge.

Putting an end to protracted situations of displacement in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe requires political will on the part of the States concerned. It will be necessary to build and sustain political commitment.

Ensuring sufficient funding for European operations in a global context of competing needs will require constant advocacy and attention, as well as creativity. ■

UNHCR's budget in Europe 2002 - 2011

Millions (USD)



UNHCR'S BUDGET IN EUROPE (USD)

Operation	Revised budget	PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	Total
		Refugee programme	Stateless programme	Reintegration projects	IDP projects	
	2010	2011				
EASTERN EUROPE						
Armenia	3,822,813	2,283,100	180,784	983,718	0	3,447,602
Azerbaijan	6,237,541	4,598,934	253,234	0	1,078,853	5,931,021
Georgia	62,095,602	3,085,956	1,587,559	0	13,955,218	18,628,733
Russian Federation	25,048,032	8,128,841	1,220,242	1,281,808	13,675,359	24,306,250
Turkey	16,771,864	16,693,590	249,392	0	0	16,942,982
Ukraine Regional Office ¹	11,591,565	10,223,117	852,287	0	0	11,075,404
Subtotal	125,567,417	45,013,538	4,343,498	2,265,526	28,709,430	80,331,992
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE						
Bosnia and Herzegovina	19,283,745	3,984,363	1,233,886	0	12,295,174	17,513,423
Croatia	6,494,640	1,342,558	491,331	5,031,409	0	6,865,298
Serbia	53,179,757	13,625,344	2,014,277	8,647,739	17,941,550	42,228,910
Montenegro, the Republic of	5,959,572	5,036,743	437,226	0	0	5,473,969
The form. Yug. Rep. of Macedonia	4,250,661	3,174,489	338,319	0	0	3,512,808
Subtotal	89,168,375	27,163,497	4,515,039	13,679,148	30,236,724	75,594,408
CENTRAL EUROPE						
Hungary Regional Office ²	9,687,769	9,134,917	648,189	0	0	9,783,106
Regional activities	1,070,918	3,556,548	0	0	0	3,556,548
Subtotal	10,758,687	12,691,465	648,189	0	0	13,339,654
NORTHERN, WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE						
Belgium Regional Office ³	4,795,258	11,471,349	1,171,946	0	0	12,643,295
France	2,870,188	0	0	0	0	0
Germany ⁴	4,032,680	0	0	0	0	0
Ireland	687,263	0	0	0	0	0
Italy Regional Office ⁵	11,680,930	10,608,750	81,473	0	0	10,690,223
Spain	1,516,550	1,356,762	234,190	0	0	1,590,952
Sweden Regional Office ⁶	2,232,378	2,210,577	469,541	0	0	2,680,118
United Kingdom	1,634,355	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	29,449,601	25,647,438	1,957,150	0	0	27,604,588
Total	254,944,081	110,515,938	11,463,876	15,944,674	58,946,154	196,870,642

¹ Includes activities in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova.

² Includes activities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

³ Includes activities in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Austria, Ireland, UK and the Liaison office in Switzerland.

⁴ Includes activities in Austria.

⁵ Includes activities in Albania, Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Portugal.

⁶ Includes activities in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway.