

# Eastern Europe

**Armenia**  
**Azerbaijan**  
**Belarus**  
**Georgia**  
**Moldova**  
**Russian Federation**  
**Turkey**  
**Ukraine**



In Georgia, families have been living in a collective center for internally displaced persons for nearly two decades since they fled the conflict in Abkhazia.



## | Working environment |

In Eastern Europe, UNHCR works in a diverse range of situations, involving asylum-seekers and refugees from as many as 70 countries, as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and stateless people.

Asylum systems in the subregion remain fragile, and vulnerable to political changes and sensitivities. Around 5,000 persons applied for asylum in countries in this subregion in the first half of 2010. Some countries decline to consider asylum applications from specific nationalities. UNHCR is concerned about access to territory and asylum procedures, instances of *refoulement*, low recognition rates and the increasing use of complementary forms of protection, instead of 1951 Convention refugee status.

The frequent reorganization of government departments handling border management, migration and asylum also poses problems. Where asylum systems do not function properly, people of concern tend to move irregularly, particularly in an attempt to reach countries of the European Union (EU),

frequently with the help of human smugglers. Throughout the subregion, UNHCR is often compelled to provide direct grants to the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees to meet their immediate assistance needs, pending decisions on their status, or a suitable durable solution.

Statelessness, particularly as a result of the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, remains an issue of concern throughout the subregion. Although the precise number of people who are stateless in Eastern Europe is not known, UNHCR's initial estimate has put their number at around 120,000.

Eastern Europe continues to be characterized by large-scale internal displacement, with nearly a million IDPs in the Caucasus region. In countries where UNHCR has been invited by the host authorities to intervene on behalf of IDPs, it does so in accordance with the UN's *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. While UNHCR promotes access to durable solutions, including return and local integration, unfortunately return is only possible if the root causes of conflict are resolved.



## Strategy in 2011

UNHCR will continue to pursue its three main objectives in this subregion: to strengthen national asylum systems and safeguard asylum in the broader migration context; to prevent and reduce the incidence of statelessness, while promoting accession to the Statelessness Conventions; and to meet the needs of IDPs, and find sustainable solutions for them, including both return and local integration.

In its efforts to strengthen national asylum systems, UNHCR will pursue its cooperation with the governments concerned, and with other actors, including the European Union, other States which support asylum capacity building, and NGOs. These partnerships form part of UNHCR's efforts to identify and respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees, while seeking durable solutions for them. UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action for refugee protection in the context of mixed migration provides the basis for this work.

## Constraints

Many Eastern European countries invest considerable resources in controlling irregular migration, but see asylum as a lesser priority. Some consider a fully functioning asylum system as a hindrance to the implementation of their migration policy, rather than as an integral part of it.

Inadequate resources also make it challenging for governments to comply with their commitments to meet international standards with regard to refugee protection. Asylum-seekers and refugees thus have to contend with inadequate procedures, exacerbated by their difficult living conditions. Xenophobia and racism hinder the efforts of refugees to integrate throughout the subregion.

Many asylum-seekers and refugees in Eastern Europe depend on limited financial support from UNHCR. Many also lack legal status and are therefore unable to access the labour market. These obstacles to local integration encourage onward movement to find protection elsewhere, notably in countries of the EU.

Local integration schemes for recognized refugees throughout Eastern Europe are very limited, or are not given priority within government plans. Most governments have few or no national structures or procedures to promote such integration, while the resources allocated are insufficient and often poorly programmed.

While the root causes of internal displacement remain unresolved, durable solutions for the nearly one million IDPs in this subregion are elusive. For IDPs to make free and informed choices about their future, the environment must be conducive to return, or offer genuine opportunities for those who wish to integrate locally.



## Operations

Operations in **Georgia**, the **Russian Federation** and **Turkey** are described in separate chapters

In **Armenia**, UNHCR will continue to promote improved standards in the treatment of refugees and promote their local integration. For those unable to meet their immediate needs, UNHCR will provide focused and limited assistance geared to promoting self-reliance. The Office will also support community-based activities, increase emphasis on building the capacity of refugee community associations and expand the range of its local partners. UNHCR will support the Government's efforts to mobilize development partners to support the integration of refugees.

UNHCR will continue to assist the Armenian authorities in building their asylum institutions. Through workshops, seminars and on-the-job training, UNHCR will help them to further enhance their skills and knowledge of the principles of international refugee and human rights law, and the best practices of States in developing and managing asylum systems.

In **Azerbaijan**, UNHCR will engage in structured consultations with the State Migration Service, Parliament and law enforcement bodies to protect and assist asylum-seekers and refugees and reduce statelessness. Strengthening the national asylum system will be a priority. UNHCR will promote refugee self-sufficiency, particularly among those living in urban environments. The Office will pursue awareness-raising and advocacy for the rights of IDPs and will seek to address gaps in the provision of protection and assistance to them UNHCR will proactively work for solutions for IDPs, including local integration for those who so wish.

The work of the Regional Office in Kyiv, which covers the **Republic of Belarus**, the **Republic of Moldova** and **Ukraine**, will continue to use the 10-Point Plan of Action as a useful framework for responding to mixed migration movements. Such movements through the subregion and to the nearby countries of the EU represent considerable challenges to these governments, as does the migration of their own citizens.

Strategic action will focus on: (i) enhancing compliance with international standards, in particular through protection-sensitive approaches to border and migration management, and to refugee status determination procedures; (ii) supporting the local integration of refugees, and the resettlement of those for whom local integration is not an option; (iii) advocating for accession to the UN Statelessness

Conventions, and measures for better identification of and support for stateless persons; and (iv) assisting persons of concern not catered for by governmental systems, while encouraging government to take over this responsibility. Participatory assessments will be used to identify the needs of persons of concern.

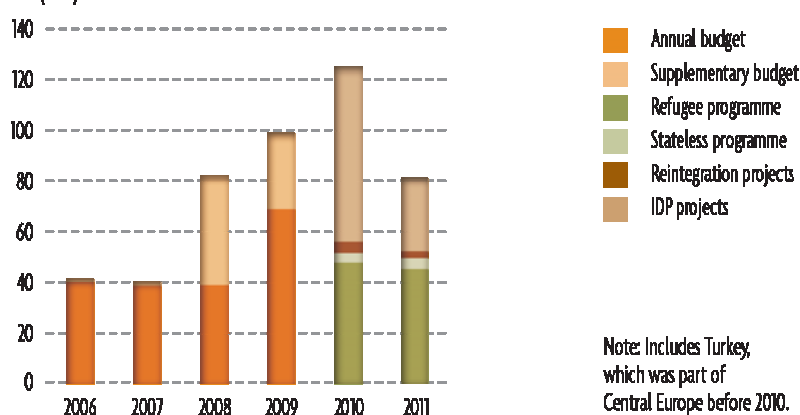
This subregion is still suffering from the impact of the global economic crisis, and refugee protection tends to be given lower priority than economic recovery and reform. The support of UNHCR will thus remain crucial if governments are to live up to their commitments to comply with international standards. Protection monitoring, including at the borders, undertaken jointly by the authorities, UNHCR, IOM and NGOs, will be important in order to ensure access to the territory and the asylum procedures. Monitoring is also important to identify refugee protection gaps in national systems that need to be addressed.

## Financial information

Of the requirements for Eastern Europe, over 50 per cent is for refugees and building asylum systems, 4 per cent for statelessness, 3 per cent for refugee reintegration and over 40 per cent for IDPs. The overall requirements for Eastern Europe in 2011 will be somewhat less than in 2010, because of decreased needs for IDPs, mainly in Georgia.

## UNHCR's budget in Eastern Europe 2006 – 2011

Millions (USD)



## UNHCR budget for Eastern Europe (USD)

OPERATION	2010 REVISED BUDGET	2011				TOTAL
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	
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 <sup>1</sup>	11,591,565	10,223,117	852,287	0	0	11,075,404
<b>Total</b>	<b>125,567,417</b>	<b>45,013,538</b>	<b>4,343,498</b>	<b>2,265,526</b>	<b>28,709,430</b>	<b>80,331,992</b>

<sup>1</sup>Includes activities in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova.