

## **Update on UNHCR operations in Europe**

### **A. Situational update, including new developments**

Almost four years on from the start of the international armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, hostilities continue to exact a brutal toll on the civilian population and infrastructure. Over 3.75 million people remain displaced inside Ukraine amid escalating fighting along the frontline. The number of civilian casualties continues to rise with at least 1,670 civilians killed or injured in July 2025, setting a record for monthly casualties since May 2022. Displaced and war-affected people inside Ukraine continue to face significant challenges with household savings depleted, homes damaged and critical services overstretched. The 2025 Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan estimates that 12.7 million people require humanitarian assistance.

Over 5.7 million refugees from Ukraine have sought safety globally since February 2022. Of this number, 5.1 million are in Europe, where States continue to demonstrate solidarity and support, including by taking concrete steps to support the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in national systems and services. In several countries, refugees there are becoming more self-reliant and positively contributing to the local economy, while refugee-led organizations seek to maintain support for vulnerable refugee and host community members, despite significant budget reductions. While most refugees continue to express their intention to return to Ukraine when the situation allows, insecurity and concerns around access to housing, employment and services continue to pose significant obstacles to return. In this context, UNHCR welcomes the European Union's decision in July 2025 to extend temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine until March 2027.

Following more than 14 years of civil war in the Syrian Arab Republic, the events of December 2024 marked a turning point, prompting many Syrian refugees to voluntarily return from neighbouring countries. As of the end of August 2025, over 474,000 refugees had returned from neighbouring Türkiye alone, which continues to generously host 2.5 million Syrians.

Mixed movements along the primary Mediterranean and northwest African maritime routes towards Europe remain stable in 2025, with 80,000 sea arrivals recorded as of July. From January to July 2025, Italy and Greece observed an increase in arrivals from Libya, with Italy and the Greek island of Crete recording 32,700 and 10,700 arrivals respectively. An increasing number of Sudanese nationals are seeking safety in Europe, with 5,600 having arrived as of July 2025 and representing 7 per cent of all arrivals to Europe this year. Meanwhile, mixed movements across the English Channel reached record levels in 2025, with 25,500 individuals arriving by sea to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as of July 2025 and 24 individuals reported dead or missing along this route.

The challenging financial situation continues to significantly impact UNHCR's presence and response in Europe, resulting in the reduction or termination of 75 per cent of all partnership agreements, the discontinuation of over 500 staff positions and a significant reduction of the organization's operational footprint in more than 10 countries. These measures are having an impact on the delivery of assistance, threatening localization gains and reducing UNHCR's ability to engage along key mixed movement routes and with regional organizations. Nevertheless, in locations where its organizational presence has been reduced, UNHCR maintains the capacity to intervene in response to short-term needs and implement mandate-driven activities, as funding becomes available.

## **B. Progress and challenges in achieving the 2025 plan for Europe – by impact area**

### *Attaining favourable protection environments*

The European Union's Pact on Migration and Asylum will reach a key milestone in June 2026, with the new rules governing the common European asylum system entering into application. In the meantime, UNHCR is providing technical assistance to European Union institutions and Member States focused on supporting the comprehensive, timely and well-resourced implementation of the Pact and providing the necessary tools to appropriately manage national asylum systems, including during periods of migratory pressure. In the context of discussions around potential changes to the "safe third country" concept under European Union law and the proposed European Union Return Regulation, UNHCR has provided advice on the necessary safeguards for the lawful transfer of asylum-seekers from one state to another and with respect to the effective return of individuals found not to be in need of international protection.

UNHCR recognizes the complex challenges that States face due to mixed movements of refugees and migrants towards Europe, while underscoring the serious risks encountered by these populations en route. In this context, it urges support for a whole-of-route approach in countries of origin, asylum, transit and destination to effectively address the root causes of irregular movements and identify regular pathways that offer alternatives to dangerous journeys. To mitigate protection risks and preserve access to asylum in Europe for individuals in need of international protection, UNHCR continues to engage with States regarding lawful policy options to address the challenges posed by mixed and onwards movements.

UNHCR continues to monitor developments inside Ukraine and advocate that refugees be provided with legal status and access to rights in host countries until they can return home. Meanwhile, it supports refugees to reach informed decisions about potential return. The digital platform "Ukraine is Home", launched in July 2024, provides refugees with information regarding their rights and legal status in host countries. It also advises refugees and internally displaced persons on access to services, government entitlements and other assistance available in their places of origin in Ukraine. UNHCR continues to advocate a flexible approach towards temporary travel to Ukraine to enable refugees to make informed decisions on return, as well as the safeguarding of legal status and access to rights in host countries in the interim.

### *Realizing rights in safe environments*

From January to July 2025, UNHCR delivered services to over 600,000 internally displaced persons and war-affected individuals in Ukraine across various sectors, including protection, counselling, legal aid and psychosocial support for over 300,000 people. A total of 100,000 people received emergency shelter assistance and support with durable housing solutions, while over 90,000 people received multi-purpose cash assistance, including to meet winter-related needs. Subject to adequate funding, UNHCR seeks to provide support to 2.7 million internally displaced persons, returnees and war-affected individuals in a range of sectors in 2025. The preparation and response to winter-related needs will be a key focus in the coming months. As part of the wider inter-agency winter response, UNHCR will deliver critical assistance to help war-affected individuals stay safe and warm in their homes, including through the provision of cash assistance and improved insulation of homes and living spaces.

UNHCR continues to support government-led responses including through coordinating the Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation. In 2025, the plan brings together over 260 partners across 11 neighbouring countries and foresees support to host governments in providing continued protection for refugees from Ukraine, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable and their inclusion in national systems and services. As of 31 July 2025, the Regional Refugee Response Plan was only 20 per cent funded, threatening the continued provision of services to refugees and the ability of many local and refugee-led organizations to continue to operate. UNHCR's response in the Republic of Moldova is significantly impacted by funding constraints, with corresponding reductions in cash assistance for the most vulnerable and threats to gains on inclusion.

Developments in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2024 have significantly impacted UNHCR's operational engagement in Türkiye in 2025. It is working closely with the Government of Türkiye to prepare for, monitor and facilitate voluntary return, while maintaining support for protection services for the large number of Syrian refugees who continue to benefit from temporary protection in Türkiye. As of August 2025, UNHCR has monitored the voluntary return of some 300,000 Syrians, representing over 100,000 families. In addition to expanding its presence at border points, UNHCR will pursue efforts to strengthen the provision of counselling and information related to voluntary return during the second half of the year, while also providing material assistance in the form of cash grants.

### *Empowering communities*

Gender-based violence and related protection risks remain concerning across the region, particularly in the context of the Ukraine response, with women and girls constituting a significant proportion of refugees and internally displaced persons. In 2025, more than 14,000 individuals have benefited from specialized gender-based violence prevention and response programmes. Furthermore, over 24,000 people were reached through risk mitigation and awareness-raising activities, while some 1,800 women and adolescent girls participated in empowerment and life skills initiatives.

Mental health and psychosocial support needs remain critical across Europe. UNHCR has supported over 100,000 consultations in 2025 to address a range of needs of forcibly displaced people. In addition, UNHCR continues to strengthen the capacity of national systems, humanitarian partners and civil society actors by providing targeted training and resources to enable community-based providers to deliver inclusive and culturally appropriate services.

UNHCR continues efforts to strengthen the protection of and improve the response for refugee children, particularly unaccompanied, separated and at-risk children, with an emphasis on supporting their inclusion in national child protection systems. In 2025, UNHCR engaged with the national and local authorities in Spain to address the needs of unaccompanied children on the Canary Islands and initiated a project in Italy to improve reception conditions for children and strengthen their inclusion in the national child protection system.

### *Securing solutions*

Between January and August 2025, UNHCR intensified efforts to document and address persistent challenges to socioeconomic inclusion faced by refugees in Europe, including unemployment and underemployment, poverty, and barriers to social protection and education. To support private sector engagement, the Refugee Employment Platform launched a Regional Information Hub to support companies in various European countries interested in recruiting refugees.

To improve the evidence base for policy and programming, UNHCR signed memorandums of understanding with national statistics offices in Bulgaria and Poland and collaborated with the International Monetary Fund on Poland's Article IV report. Two flagship studies were published providing key data insights on employment rates, wages and the impact of Ukrainian refugees on Poland's economy to inform policy and practice. A regional report on the employment situation of Ukrainian refugees across Europe will be released in the final months of 2025.

UNHCR worked on strengthening regional capacity to foster sustainable responses through virtual workshops, tools and targeted training on development partnerships. A comprehensive social protection mapping across 44 European countries identified gaps in inclusion and good practices, informing the organization's action and advocacy.

Efforts to expand third-country solutions through resettlement and complementary pathways continued. UNHCR welcomed the commitments made by 12 European Union Member States to provide over 60,700 places for 2024-2025. As of 30 June 2025, more than 4,000 refugees were resettled in Europe, of whom some 3,300 were resettled to Member States of the European Union. Labour mobility programmes implemented to simultaneously address refugee protection needs and skills shortages within some European countries have shown promise. A pilot scheme established in Italy in 2024, in close collaboration with the

Government, businesses and non-governmental organizations, has facilitated the arrival of refugees from Colombia, Egypt, Jordan and Uganda to date. The initial success of this initiative has sparked interest and discussions among companies and labour agencies.

Efforts to address statelessness in Europe also continued. In July 2025, North Macedonia became the first country in South-East Europe to resolve all known cases of statelessness resulting from the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. To advance implementation of the statelessness-related provisions in the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum, UNHCR published advocacy messages and engaged with the European Commission via the Asylum Procedure Regulation Contact Committee. The joint UNHCR- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) compilation of good practices to end childhood statelessness launched in July 2025 will be used to guide further advocacy across the OSCE region and beyond. In May 2025, a Regional Roundtable on Roma Statelessness was convened by the Council of Europe, the European Network on Statelessness and UNHCR convened to mark the successful conclusion of the Roma Integration Statelessness Project (2024–2025). Governments from across South-East Europe reviewed project findings and renewed commitments to address Roma statelessness.

### **C. Financial information**

In October 2024 the Executive Committee approved a budget for 2025 of \$1,247.1 million for the activities of UNHCR in Europe. This figure is 15 per cent lower compared to the 2024 budget of \$1,466.2 million, reflecting a continued shift away from humanitarian assistance towards sustainable responses focusing on inclusion, livelihoods and protection.

The six largest operations accounting for \$1,030.3 million, or 83 per cent of the budget for Europe are: Ukraine (\$550.0 million); Türkiye (\$280.0 million); the Republic of Moldova (\$80.3 million); Poland (\$42.0 million); and Romania and Greece (\$39.0 million each).

The two impact areas with the highest budget allocations, as approved in October 2024, are “realizing rights in safe environments” (\$484.0 million, or 39 per cent) and “attaining favourable protection environments” (\$432.7 million, or 35 per cent). The impact area “securing solutions” has the third highest budget allocation, comprising \$239.5 million or 19 per cent, and focuses on socioeconomic inclusion and integration programmes. The requirements for the impact area “empowering communities and achieving gender equality” amount to \$90.9 million, or 7 per cent of the total budget for Europe.

As of 31 August 2025, 41 per cent of the Europe region’s 2025 financial requirements were funded, taking into consideration the indicative allocation of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions.

---