

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

2002 COUNTRY

OPERATIONS PLAN

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

(a) *Context and Beneficiary Population*

● **Political context**

Slovenia is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional republic. Regular, free and open elections have been held since the country's independence in 1991. In February 1999 the Association Agreement with EU took effect and Slovenia became officially an Associate Member of EU.

● **Security situation**

Slovenia is a politically and socially stable and safe country.

● **Protection issues**

In April 2001 there are approximately 8,000 persons of UNHCR's concern in Slovenia. These can be divided into asylum seekers, persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina under temporary protection status, and others of concern, which consist mainly of stateless ex-Yugoslavs, most of whom are expected to benefit from the regularisation process initiated in 1999.

The **Bosnians who enjoy temporary protection** under the Law on temporary refuge are persons who fled their country as a consequence of war. This Law does not foresee any cessation of the temporary protection status (TPS), and does not consequently allow for any integration. The repatriation possibilities for this group appear also almost exhausted: from 551 repatriation cases in 1998, it has decreased to 125 in 2000. However, changes of TPS into temporary residence (with a visa allowing for work) has taken place legally on the basis of the Law on Aliens, enabling UNHCR to offer the group of Bosnian refugees with TPS, vocational training and other limited integration types of assistance. UNHCR is expecting the Slovene Government to consider a group integration for the Bosnians refugees, which would bring a more stable and durable status, with legal access to the labor market, in addition and outside the normal quota reserved for foreigners

Slovenia received **9,244 applications for asylum** in 2000, compared to 72 applications in 1997, 337 applications in 1998 and 867 applications in 1999. With respect to the country of origin, the highest number of applicants came from Iran (5,924 applicants), Turkey (1,119 applicants), Iraq (447 applicants) and Yugoslavia (397 applicants). The sudden raise of the number of applications in connection with the lack of capacity and experience of the Slovene asylum / migration system, has resulted in almost disastrous reception conditions as well as very slow asylum procedures. It is estimated that 85% of the applicants leave the country a few days after lodging the application. At the end of February 2001, 8,779 asylum applications were pending. As the majority of the applicants have left the country, it is estimated that 800 asylum applicants are currently in Slovenia waiting for a decision.

Most of the stateless persons from Former Yugoslavia are expected to benefit from the regularisation procedure under the Law on the Regularisation of **Persons from Former Yugoslavs Republic without status/citizenship**, which was initiated in 1999. The Ministry of the Interior received about 13,000 applications for regularisation. At the end of 2000, 4,539 applications were still pending. It is estimated that 500-1,000 persons may be rejected in the regularisation procedure.

● **UNHCR's role**

Core problems in Slovenia are: 1) low capacity of Asylum Department of MOI, which is the first instance in the RSD procedure (shortage of resources for country of origin research, of human resources, of interpreters as well as supporting technical equipment, 2) reception conditions are of inadequate capacity and quality, 3) lack of integration perspective for approximately 2,600 Bosnian refugees under temporary protection, 4) lack of status for persons which have been/will be rejected under the criteria of the Law on the Regularisation of Persons from Former Yugoslavs without status/citizenship 5) refugee assisting NGO's are to a very high extent financially dependent of UNHCR, 6) the government integration programme for recognised refugees exists in the law, but is not implemented in practice, 7) governmental programme for assistance to asylum seekers and refugees under temporary protection has significant gaps and does not provide for sufficient assistance for the whole target population 8) lack of awareness of the difference between refugees and other migrants as well as of the international rights of refugees, 10) the high number of different kinds of migrants using Slovenia as a transit country has triggered xenophobic attitudes among some groups and individuals.

In this context UNHCR's strategy in Slovenia focuses on capacity building and awareness raising activities.

In the absence of a fully functioning state assistance programme, UNHCR provides assistance to extremely vulnerable persons of UNHCR's concern (mainly old and/or ill persons). For the Bosnians who have been for nine years under temporary protection status, and pending the consideration by the Government of a more durable solution, UNHCR and its implementing partners are able to facilitate some socio-integration through vocational and language training, as well as income-generating projects, while continuing to provide legal assistance.

● **Overview of each beneficiary population and theme**

The programme in Slovenia is a part of the UNHCR's overall strategy for the Central European and the Baltic States (CEBS) for the period of 2001-2005, which is composed of two themes and one beneficiary population: Quality asylum in a uniting Europe (Theme #1), Europe's support to UNHCR and refugees world-wide (Theme #2) and Statelessness (Beneficiary Population #1). In addition to the aforementioned three elements, which are common for all the CEBS states, the programme in Slovenia contains a Beneficiary population # 2, which consists of Bosnians under temporary protection.

Under the **theme #1 Quality asylum in a uniting Europe** UNHCR's goal in Slovenia is a fair and efficient asylum system, which national governmental and non-governmental actors are able to sustain without UNHCR funding. The main activities in this field are capacity building and lobbying and the targets of the activities are the main actors in the protection, assistance and durable solutions fields for asylum seekers and refugees in Slovenia.

Under the **theme #2 Europe's support to UNHCR and refugees world-wide** UNHCR's goal in Slovenia is that Slovenia will start making financial contributions to UNHCR and that the public in general as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations will give active and well-informed support to refugees and UNHCR. Activities in this field consist of lobbying activities by the government as well as public awareness activities targeting the general public.

By the end of 2000, **beneficiary population #1** consisted of 4,539 stateless ex-Yugoslavs whose applications under the regularisation procedure was still pending. BO Ljubljana estimates that 500-1,000 persons could be rejected under the regularisation procedure. Out of the stateless ex-Yugoslavs who applied for regularisation, 56 % were from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 19% from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 18 % from Croatia, 4 % from Macedonia. The country of origin of 3 % of the applicants is not known.

In April 2001, the **beneficiary population 2#** consisted of approximately 2,670 Bosnians, of which 19 % were under 17 years of age, 60 % were between 17 and 60 years old and 21 % were over 60 years old. The majority of the beneficiary population originate from regions in BiH where they would now be a minority when they return (86% originate from the Republica Srpska). 63 % of the beneficiary population are women.

● **Linkages to other countries within a defined “situation”**

Considering the similarity of issues in the asylum field with other Central European as well as Baltic States the office maintains regular co-operation with UNHCR offices in the region. In this context regular contacts are also maintained with UNHCR Branch Office in Brussels (theme #1 and theme #2). BO Ljubljana also maintains close co-operation with UNHCR Offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, mainly on topics related to caseload #2.

● **Capacity and presence of implementing partners**

BO Ljubljana will in the future work with four implementing partners, of which three are NGOs. All of the three non-governmental implementing partners have been established during the past few years with the assistance of UNHCR, because NGOs were quasi non-existent in Slovenia when BO Ljubljana was established in 1992. Thus the partnerships with non-governmental implementing partners has had in the past a rather strong element of capacity building. BO Ljubljana estimates that the capacity of implementing partners has progressively improved. All of the implementing partners have to some extent managed to find alternative fund-raising sources. One of the implementing partners, Slovene Philanthropy, who is carrying out activities in the sectors of transportation, domestic needs/household support as well as community services, engages a considerable number of volunteers in its activities. It is also worth mentioning that one of the recent implementing partners, the Legal Aid Center, which in 2002 continues to provide legal counselling to refugees, is no longer in need of financial help from UNHCR.

● **Presence and roles of other UN agencies and international organisations**

The International Organisation for Migration has set up an office in Slovenia in January 2001. Other organisations of the UN system are not present in Slovenia. The good co-operation with the Information and Documentation Centre of the Council of Europe as well as with the EU delegation is expected to continue in the year 2002.

(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

<i>Name of Theme: Quality asylum in an uniting Europe</i>	
Main Goal: States will develop and harmonise an asylum system in accordance with international standards	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asylum relevant institutions develop in the run-up to EU accession / national actors will be capable of sustaining a functional asylum system - The needs and rights of asylum seekers and recognised refugees are properly addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocating the Government for raising capacity of Asylum Department of the MOI as well as of asylum home - Support for NGOs capacity - Assistance in alternative fund-raising to governmental and non-governmental institutions - Lobbying the government to adopt and properly implement secondary legislation supporting the Asylum Law - Promotion of refugee law among practising lawyers (e.g. publication, translation and sharing of relevant protection literature, refugee law library) - training activities for GOs and NGOs as well as legal practitioners - through IPs network basic assistance will be provided to persons of HCR's concern who are excluded or not adequately assisted by the Government

<i>Name of Theme: Europe's support to UNHCR and refugees world-wide</i>	
Main Goal(s): I) Slovenian Government as well as individuals/corporations will increase their support to UNHCR II) The Slovenian public as well as Slovenian governmental and non-governmental institutions give more and better informed support to refugees and UNHCR	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slovenia will start making financial contributions to UNHCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobbying activities targeting the Government for financial contributions to the UNHCR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The public at large will be better educated on global refugee issues and the protection needs of refugees - UNHCR's image will be recognised, respected and widely viewed as relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-profile and comprehensive public information campaign (with TV spot and production of related postcards, telephone-cards and t-shirts, regular refugee movie nights and establishment of video-library) - Educational PI campaign among school-children

<i>Name of Beneficiary Population: Stateless persons</i>	
Main Goal: Statelessness will decrease in Slovenia	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
- The regularisation procedure under the Law on Regularisation of Persons from Former Yugoslavia without status will be carried out fairly and swiftly.	- Legal assistance to stateless persons
- Those rejected under the regularisation procedure will receive permanent residence and subsequently citizenship	- Legal assistance to stateless persons in appeal procedures - Lobbying activities targeting the Government

<i>Name of Beneficiary Population: Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina with Temporary protection status</i>	
Main Goal(s): Durable solution for refugees currently under temporary protection	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
- Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are currently under temporary protection, will get a permanent residence status and the Government will adopt and implement an integration programme.	- Lobbying activities targeting the Government for the implementation of a group solution - If the model of individual procedures for integration will be adopted, legal assistance will be provided through the Asylum Lawyers Network - Provide expertise / lobby for a comprehensive integration programme and its implementation. - Assistance to governmental and non-governmental institutions on fund-raising opportunities for integration activities. - Basic assistance will be given to persons in urgent need who will not receive assistance by the Government.
- Refugees willing to repatriate get additional assistance	- Lobbying for an increase in state financial repatriation assistance.
- General public will be positive towards legal and social integration	- Several PI activities supporting integration of Bosnian refugees in Slovenia