

This chapter provides a summary of the general environment in which UNHCR will operate in Europe in 2016. It presents an overview of the organization's strategy for the region, the main challenges foreseen and the financial requirements for its operational response.

Details of the operations in the region and its subregions in 2016 are presented on the Global Focus website at <http://reporting.unhcr.org>.

Syrian refugees arriving on the island of Lesbos, Greece, after crossing from Turkey in an inflatable raft.

## | WORKING ENVIRONMENT |

- Since mid-2015, the number of people risking their lives at sea in search of safety in Europe has increased rapidly. The majority have arrived in Greece after crossing stretches of the Aegean Sea from Turkey, which hosts the largest number of refugees worldwide under UNHCR's mandate (more than 2 million by October 2015). From Greece, many have sought to move onwards by land through countries in South-Eastern and Central Europe, in order to reach European Union Member States further afield.
- By early November, more than 790,000 people had arrived in Europe by sea in 2015. The number of arrivals in Greece is already 13 times higher than the total number of arrivals in 2014. Most people are fleeing war, violence and persecution – originating mainly from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) – and there is a larger proportion of families, women, and unaccompanied and separated children than in previous years.
- Almost 445,000 asylum applications were lodged in 38 European countries between January and June 2015 – 60 per cent more than in the same period in 2014. Some 78 per cent of these applications were lodged in European Union Member States, mainly France, Germany, Hungary and Sweden. Serbia and Kosovo (Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)) and Turkey have also experienced significant increases – tenfold and eightfold respectively – in the number of asylum applications filed in 2015 compared to the same period in 2014.
- The scale and fluidity of refugee movements in Europe have posed significant challenges for asylum systems and reception facilities in many countries. There remain serious concerns about the exposure of refugees and migrants to smuggling rings and harsh and dangerous conditions. Despite increased search and rescue operations, more than 3,400 refugees and migrants lost their lives trying to reach Europe by sea between January and October 2015. In response to these challenges, UNHCR has declared internal level-2 emergencies for its operations in Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and, most recently, Hungary.



UNHCR/A. MCCONNELL



# EUROPE

- In May 2015, the European Commission issued the European Agenda on Migration, containing a number of proposals to respond to asylum and migration challenges in the European Union. UNHCR has welcomed the comprehensive approach offered by the European Agenda on Migration, including recognition of the need for coordinated action across a range of policy areas among relevant European Union stakeholders.
- At the same time, Europe continues to grapple with displacement as a result of ongoing violence in Ukraine. By October 2015, the Government of Ukraine had registered 1.53 million internally displaced people (IDPs). An even higher number reportedly remained unregistered. More than 922,600 Ukrainians have also applied for asylum or other forms of legal stay in neighbouring countries and the Member States of the European Union, including

the Russian Federation (765,600), Belarus (81,600) and Germany (4,600). Many more have benefitted from visa-free regimes in other countries.

- The number of European States party to the two statelessness conventions has continued to rise, with the accession of Turkey to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons in March 2015. Nevertheless, there remain challenges in ensuring documentation and access to rights for many of the estimated 600,000 stateless people in Europe, pending their acquisition or confirmation of a nationality. Lowering the risk of statelessness among children born to those seeking international protection in Europe will require identification and prevention efforts to be strengthened, and legislation to be effectively implemented.

## | STRATEGY |

UNHCR's response in 2016 to the needs of people of concern in the many complex and critical situations across this region will be articulated around the following protection and operational strategies.

### ◉ *Emergency response to refugee arrivals and mixed movements by sea*

The situation of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean is reaching a critical point. In view of the further support which the evolving operational context of the crisis calls for, following the declaration of an internal level-2 emergency, in August 2015, the High Commissioner designated the Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe as Regional Refugee Coordinator (RRC) for the situation in Europe. The RRC is leading the organization's response to the emergency, ensuring a comprehensive approach across all affected countries and closely coordinating with the European Union.

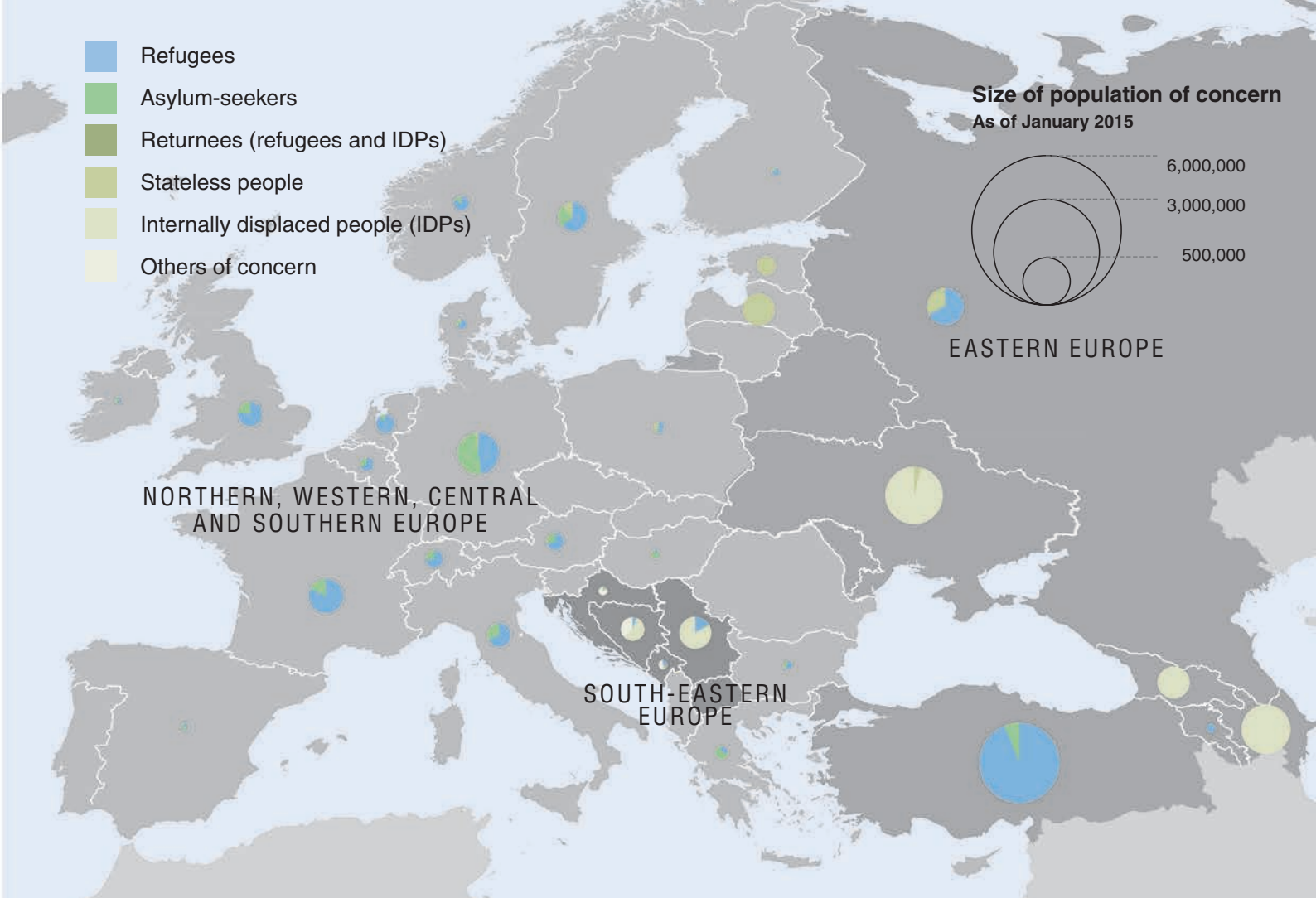
In 2016, UNHCR will continue to cooperate with relevant government counterparts, European Union institutions and agencies, international partners, non-governmental organizations and local communities to respond to the situation

in line with its Special Mediterranean Initiative. The Office will continue to focus on: providing emergency and life-saving assistance; strengthening coordination structures; conducting protection monitoring, critical incident reporting and advocacy; providing appropriate advisory, technical and functional support to government authorities; and capacity building, particularly in terms of emergency reception arrangements.

### ◉ *Safeguarding asylum space and providing acceptable reception conditions*

UNHCR will continue to advocate for alternative legal channels to allow refugees to reach Europe safely, including: enhanced resettlement opportunities; humanitarian admission programmes; private or community-based sponsorship schemes; increased access to family reunification; humanitarian visas; and student scholarship schemes.

The organization welcomes the emerging consensus that robust search-and-rescue capacities are essential. UNHCR will continue to work closely with the European Union border agency, Frontex, to advise



on protection issues. With relevant counterparts, UNHCR has established protection monitoring mechanisms at border areas along the refugee/migratory route and will continue to support authorities in ensuring protection-sensitive border management.

Establishing adequate reception conditions, particularly for individuals with specific needs, remains a challenge in Europe. Innovative solutions are required, such as the sharing of reception facilities (as agreed by Austria and Slovakia in July 2015 through a memorandum of understanding) and the provision of vouchers for accommodation, which can benefit local economies and infrastructure.

○ *Building and maintaining fair and effective asylum and protection systems*

UNHCR will continue to support governments to strengthen national asylum procedures, including through quality control measures. The Office is engaged with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), both bilaterally and as a

member of EASO’s management board. Training materials will be developed to assist authorities to assess credibility in the context of asylum claims made by children. UNHCR will also support the second phase of the Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus (2015-2017), which will focus on addressing outstanding gaps in the refugee status determination procedure, improving access to asylum, as well as the quality of judicial review.

○ *Securing durable solutions*

There are now regular resettlement programmes in 19 European countries. Collectively, 31 European States (27 European Union Member States plus the associated States) will resettle more than 20,000 people in 2015 and 2016, in line with the resettlement proposal contained in the European Agenda on Migration. In response to UNHCR’s calls for 130,000 places to be made available for Syrian refugees by the end of 2016, 22 European countries have pledged to provide some

63,650 resettlement places and/or other forms of legal admission. The Office will provide support to countries involved in the European Union refugee relocation scheme, which envisages the relocation of persons in clear need of international protection from certain States, including Greece and Italy, to other European Union countries.

In Ukraine, UNHCR will continue to advocate for durable solutions for IDPs, including return. Priorities will include targeted assistance for protection monitoring and interventions, support for community-based organizations working with the displaced, and provision of shelter and multi-purpose cash assistance. “Quick impact projects” will be explored to facilitate integration and peaceful coexistence in host communities. Subject to humanitarian access, UNHCR will assist people returning to non-government-controlled areas or who are at risk of displacement in such areas. UNHCR will continue to support the Government to improve legislation relating to internal displacement, as well as its implementation. The Office will also continue to co-lead the protection and emergency shelter clusters, as part of the inter-agency response.

The search for durable solutions for displaced people in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe will continue. UNHCR will continue to support local integration efforts, working with national stakeholders to ensure people in need of international protection can access adequate housing and family reunification, including through legislative changes and national integration plans, as well as the Regional Housing Programme.

The Office will also continue to manage the Emergency Transit Centres in Timisoara, Romania, and Humenné, Slovakia.

### ○ *Preventing and resolving statelessness*

In the context of its global campaign to end statelessness by 2024, UNHCR will continue to advocate measures to reduce known stateless populations, notably in the Baltic States and in the successor States to the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. Measures may include legislative amendments to permit undocumented stateless people to acquire lawful residence and/or a nationality, improvements in birth registration procedures, training for officials implementing these laws and procedures, and outreach to affected communities. Safeguards against statelessness at birth and awareness-raising amongst governments and affected communities remain particularly important in light of the increased risk of statelessness at birth for children of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe.

UNHCR is working with the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to address statelessness-related concerns. The Office will also continue advocating for the European Union to address statelessness, building on the initiatives taken by the Luxembourg Presidency of the European Council and the European Parliament. In line with its global campaign to end statelessness, UNHCR will collaborate with the European Network on Statelessness, particularly in the areas of advocacy and training.

## | CHALLENGES |

The countries in Europe have diverse political traditions, as well as differing asylum systems and integration measures. Increased arrivals and onward movements through Europe have challenged the European Union's Common European Asylum System, as well as the political resolve of European Union Member States and others, to act collectively with responsibility and solidarity, in line with their international obligations.

The ongoing conflict in Syria, in particular, is expected to continue to generate large-scale displacement to Turkey and onward movement towards European Union countries. Border management measures adopted by certain countries may have an impact on the asylum space, leading refugees and asylum-seekers to continue to resort to irregular and dangerous means of travel to find safety.

In Ukraine, the work of humanitarian organizations, including UNHCR, will likely remain challenging in certain areas due to

restrictions on humanitarian access and freedom of movement. It will be essential to ensure that partner organizations and local civil society, including community-based organizations, receive adequate financial and material support as the situation in Ukraine becomes more protracted. It will also be important to support efforts to assist IDPs to find employment and accommodation, despite the political and economic challenges facing Ukraine.

In some countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, ongoing efforts are required to develop the capacity of national asylum systems, increase refugee recognition rates and ensure that those who qualify for refugee status under the 1951 Convention receive full recognition, rather than complementary forms of protection with lesser rights and entitlements. It will also be important to increase awareness of the risk and impact of statelessness, including in relation to refugees and migrants arriving in Europe. ■

# Special Mediterranean Initiative

**T**he numbers of people risking their lives at sea in search of safety in Europe have increased at an alarming rate. By early November 2015, more than 790,000 people had arrived in Europe by sea. In Greece, the number of arrivals is already 13 times higher than in 2014.

The majority of people are fleeing war, violence and persecution – one in two new arrivals is Syrian, and more than 80 per cent originate from the world's top 10 refugee-producing countries. European States bordering the Mediterranean Sea, the western Balkans and other European countries have been struggling to deal with this influx.

UNHCR has established a *Special Mediterranean Initiative* in order to find solutions to both the causes and effects of these movements. The Office is working closely with the European Union and its Member States, as well as with other affected States in Europe, North Africa, West Africa, the East and Horn of Africa and, beyond the framework of this Initiative, with countries in the Middle East affected by ongoing conflict and forced displacement of populations.

The Special Mediterranean Initiative is a three-pronged comprehensive response to:

1. Save lives and address humanitarian and protection needs at points of transit, first arrival and destination;
2. Strengthen protection systems through capacity building in various asylum procedures in the East and Horn of Africa, North Africa and Europe; and
3. Reinforce the availability of protection and solutions in regions where refugees first find safety.

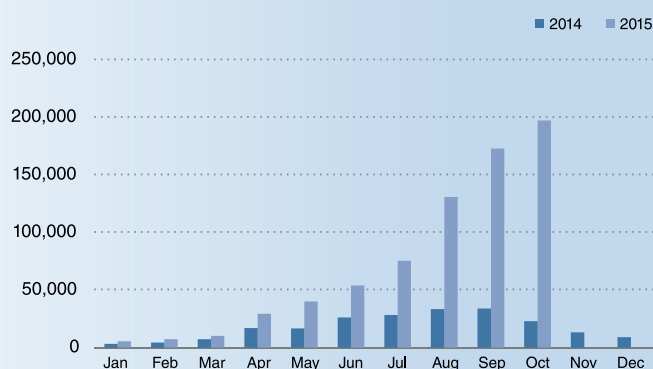
In parallel, investments in community structures and livelihood opportunities must be refocused in the main countries of origin, to help sustain and strengthen UNHCR's existing efforts within the inter-agency strategic framework. These include:

- The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016 in Response to the Syria Crisis (3RP)
- The Syria Humanitarian Response Plan
- The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees
- The High Commissioner's Global Initiative on Somali Refugees





Comparison of monthly Mediterranean Sea arrivals



UNHCR/O. LABAN-MATEI



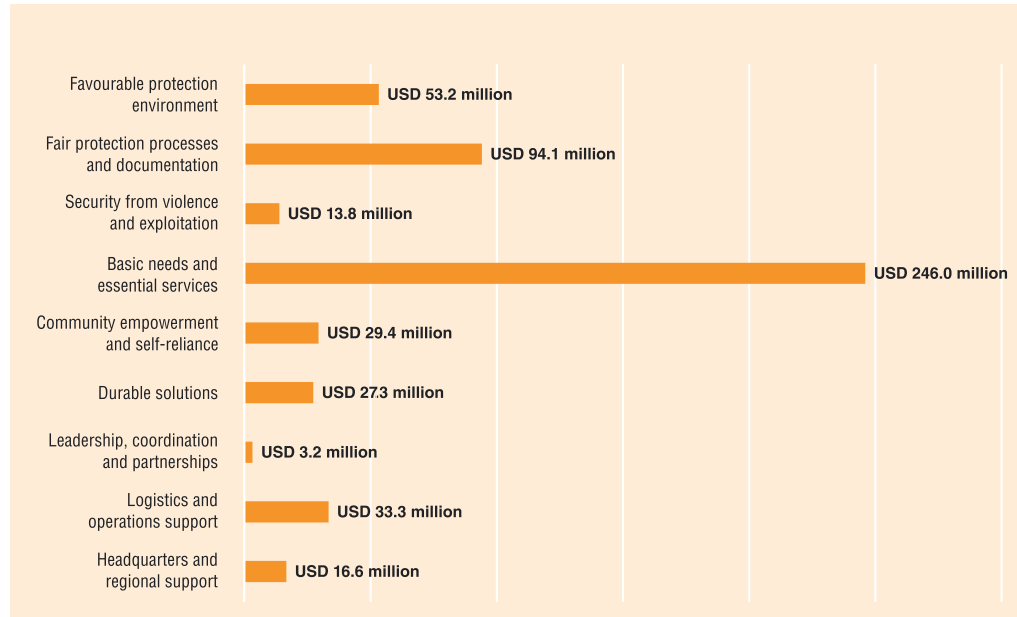
**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

UNHCR's 2016 budget for Europe is currently set at USD 516.9 million, a 7.6 per cent increase compared to 2015, and double the budgetary requirements for 2010. Eastern Europe is the subregion that has seen the largest budget increase: from USD 125.7 million in 2010 to USD 407.6 million in 2016, primarily due to the impact of the Iraq, Syria and Ukraine situations.

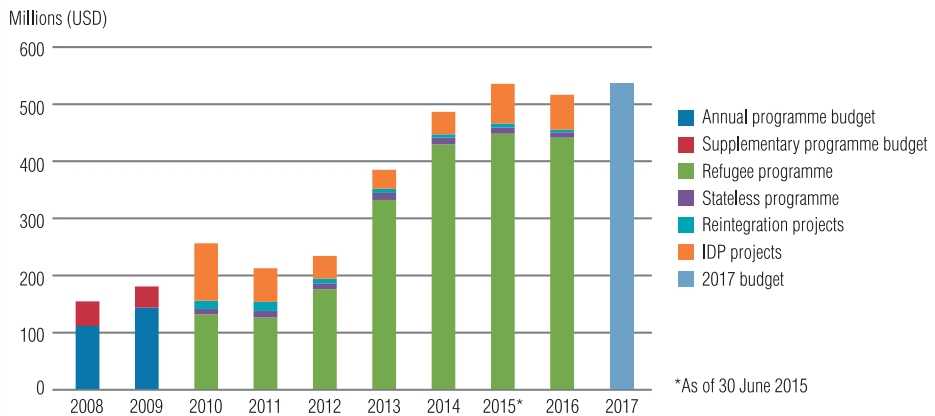
It is anticipated that significant additional resources will be needed to respond to the emergency situation in Europe in 2016. Financial requirements presented under the Special Mediterranean Initiative, and for the emergency situation in Europe, will continue to be reviewed as the situation evolves.

The Special Mediterranean Initiative also foresees activities in countries of asylum and transit in the Middle East and North Africa, West Africa, and the East and Horn of Africa.

**BUDGET FOR EUROPE | 2016 by Rights Group**



**BUDGET FOR EUROPE | 2008-2017**



## BUDGETS FOR EUROPE | USD

Operation	2015	2016				Total	2017
	Current budget (as of 30 June 2015)	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects		
<b>EASTERN EUROPE</b>							
Armenia	6,429,468	0	0	0	0	0	0
Azerbaijan	5,850,001	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belarus	0	2,228,913	10,000	0	0	2,238,913	1,341,244
Georgia Regional Office	14,639,755	14,287,694	1,045,290	0	6,750,358	22,083,342	22,500,000
Republic of Moldova	0	710,112	32,509	0	0	742,621	1,412,623
Russian Federation	6,080,652	5,094,381	350,486	0	0	5,444,867	5,783,781
Turkey	335,855,753	334,365,668	44,000	0	0	334,409,668	357,224,842
Ukraine Regional Office	50,917,442	7,207,119	655,501	0	34,777,804	42,640,424	39,489,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>419,773,070</b>	<b>363,893,887</b>	<b>2,137,786</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>41,528,162</b>	<b>407,559,836</b>	<b>427,751,492</b>
<b>SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE</b>							
Bosnia and Herzegovina Regional Office <sup>1</sup>	49,064,495	17,953,113	3,588,323	3,807,006	19,776,321	45,124,762	43,540,534
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>49,064,495</b>	<b>17,953,113</b>	<b>3,588,323</b>	<b>3,807,006</b>	<b>19,776,321</b>	<b>45,124,762</b>	<b>43,540,534</b>
<b>NORTHERN, WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE</b>							
Belgium Regional Office <sup>2</sup>	16,035,518	12,580,306	1,531,543	0	0	14,111,849	15,110,811
Hungary Regional Office <sup>3</sup>	14,783,461	10,690,680	311,912	987,344	0	11,989,936	11,175,399
Italy Regional Office <sup>4</sup>	22,319,945	20,494,742	201,800	0	0	20,696,542	19,975,203
Sweden Regional Office <sup>5</sup>	5,483,728	3,335,093	927,180	0	0	4,262,273	4,323,339
Regional activities	8,590,325	12,717,864	427,922	0	0	13,145,787	15,245,859
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>67,212,978</b>	<b>59,818,686</b>	<b>3,400,357</b>	<b>987,344</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64,206,387</b>	<b>65,830,610</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>536,050,542</b>	<b>441,665,686</b>	<b>9,126,466</b>	<b>4,794,350</b>	<b>61,304,483</b>	<b>516,890,985</b>	<b>537,122,636</b>

<sup>1</sup> As from 2015, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)) and Montenegro are reported under the Bosnia and Herzegovina Regional Office

<sup>2</sup> Includes activities in Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Liaison Office in Switzerland, and the United Kingdom

<sup>3</sup> Includes activities in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia

<sup>4</sup> Includes activities in Albania, Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Spain

<sup>5</sup> Includes activities in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway