

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Georgia
Republic of Moldova
Russian Federation
Turkey
Ukraine

Afghan refugee selling products at the market using equipment funded under a local integration scheme (Republic of Moldova).



Eastern Europe

| Working environment |

In Eastern Europe, UNHCR works in diverse situations involving refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, stateless people and asylum-seekers in the context of complex mixed-migration flows.

Asylum systems in the subregion remain fragile and vulnerable to political changes and sensitivities, despite the comparatively low numbers of applicants. UNHCR is concerned about a number of issues including access to territory and asylum procedures; instances of *refoulement*; an increase in the deportation of persons of concern; low recognition rates; and, in some countries, the use of complementary forms of protection instead of the recognition of refugees. Some improvements in the reception of asylum-seekers and the determination of their claims have been achieved in the Russian Federation.

The periodic reorganization of government departments handling border management, migration and asylum matters can leave asylum systems dysfunctional for extended periods of time. This sometimes results in people of concern becoming part of irregular movements, or resorting to people smugglers. UNHCR's project submission "Asylum Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and the south Caucasus", submitted earlier this year under a global call for proposals for the European Union's thematic funding line for Asylum and Migration, has been approved. It focuses on improving the quality of decision making in six countries in the context of refugee status determination.

Remarkable achievements in the reduction of statelessness have been witnessed in the Russian Federation, where between 2003 and 2010 more than 600,000 formerly stateless persons were naturalized. Nonetheless, following a census in the Russian Federation, 178,000 people still consider themselves stateless.

The Republic of Moldova has acceded to the statelessness conventions and established a statelessness determination procedure. Following the accession of Georgia to the 1954 Statelessness Convention, a procedure for the determination of status has been activated in the country. However, statelessness remains an issue of concern throughout the subregion, mainly as a consequence of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the difficulties facing national minorities seeking to prove their citizenship. UNHCR estimates that there could still be some 250,000 stateless people in Eastern Europe.

Large-scale internal displacement also remains a challenge in Eastern Europe. Up to a million people are still displaced in the Caucasus region. UNHCR protects and assists IDPs in most countries in the region in accordance with the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, and promotes durable solutions, including return and local integration whenever possible.

| Strategy |

UNHCR's main objectives remain the strengthening of national asylum systems; the prevention and reduction of statelessness while promoting accession to the statelessness conventions; and meeting the essential needs of IDPs while focusing on durable solutions through return and local integration.

In the context of the Asylum Quality Initiative, UNHCR will intensify its cooperation with Governments in the subregion and other relevant actors, including the European Commission, NGOs and regional actors such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Council of Europe and the OSCE and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Close engagement with regional consultative processes on refugee issues, such as the Prague Process, the Budapest Process and the EU Eastern Partnership's Panel on Migration and Asylum, will continue.

These partnerships form one component of UNHCR's response to the needs of the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees. The 10-Point Plan of Action for refugee protection in the context of mixed migration continues to provide a guiding framework for cooperation with national and regional partners on asylum and migration issues.

| Constraints |

While formally committed to international protection, a number of Eastern European countries often prioritize the control of irregular migration over asylum, and appear to consider fully functioning asylum systems a hindrance to their migration policies. A recurrent lack of resources also makes it difficult for some Governments to comply with their commitments to meet international standards in refugee protection. As a consequence, refugees and asylum-seekers are unable to avail themselves of adequate procedures. Xenophobia and racism also place hurdles in the way of refugee integration.

Owing to their legal status or because of restrictive registration policies, many asylum-seekers and refugees are unable to gain access to state assistance or local labour markets. As a result, they remain dependent on the limited financial support offered by UNHCR. Local integration schemes for recognized refugees throughout Eastern Europe are usually very limited in scope, and are given low priority in government plans which often devote few or no resources to refugee or IDP integration.

| Operations |

The operation in **Turkey** is described in a separate chapter.

In **Armenia**, UNHCR will assist the authorities to continue building asylum institutions, for instance by strengthening the national legal framework governing protection of refugees. The Office will continue to promote international standards for the treatment of refugees. It will provide focused assistance to help the most vulnerable people of concern to achieve self-reliance, and will mobilize local partners and institutions to support the local integration of refugees. UNHCR will also encourage



community-based activities, emphasizing capacity building among refugee community associations.

UNHCR will pursue structured consultations with the State Migration Service, Parliament and law enforcement agencies in **Azerbaijan** to enhance the national asylum system. Refugees living in urban areas will be assisted, within available resources, to become self-reliant to the extent possible. UNHCR will continue to advocate for the protection of IDPs while supporting the Government's efforts to find durable solutions, including local integration when appropriate.

In **Belarus**, the **Republic of Moldova** and **Ukraine**, UNHCR's work will continue to be based on the 10-Point Plan of Action, as the framework for mixed migration movements, and the Asylum Quality Initiative.

Strategic action will be focused on: (i) enhancing compliance with international standards through intensive dialogue with relevant government departments, in particular through protection-sensitive approaches to asylum issues; (ii) supporting the local integration of refugees and the resettlement of those for whom integration in the region is not an option; (iii) advocating for accession to the statelessness conventions and better identification of, and support for, stateless persons; (iv) supporting people of concern who are not assisted by government systems and encouraging Governments to take responsibility for them.

The three Governments will continue to need UNHCR's support to make their asylum systems comply with international standards. This is especially so in Ukraine, where the State Migration Service is being reformed, as well as in the Republic of Moldova. Protection monitoring, undertaken jointly by the authorities, UNHCR, IOM and NGOs, continues to be an important mechanism to ensure access to territory and asylum procedures.

In **Georgia**, UNHCR will focus on changes in legislation related to refugees and stateless persons, as well as on durable solutions for IDPs (local integration) and refugees (naturalization and local integration). A gradual transition from humanitarian interventions to sustainable longer-term development, with refugees and IDPs being integrated into development programmes, will enter its final phase.

UNHCR will support refugees in the process of naturalization and seek to ensure that the new refugee law adopted in 2011 is implemented in compliance with international standards.

UNHCR will contribute to the Georgian Government's efforts to reduce the number of stateless and potentially stateless persons and improve legislation to minimize the risk of statelessness.

After substantially reducing its assistance programmes, UNHCR will focus on sustainable durable solutions for IDPs through protection monitoring and coordination to ensure a rights-oriented implementation of the Georgia IDP Action Plan 2012-2014. Small-scale assistance will be provided to vulnerable IDPs. UNHCR will advocate for a broadening of humanitarian space. It will also contribute to the Geneva International Discussions process by fostering trust among different groups and ensuring the rights of IDPs are respected.

In the **Russian Federation**, UNHCR will focus on quality-assurance measures to strengthen the national asylum system, including improving access to the system at borders, and will contribute to the Government's plans to bring its reception infrastructure and processes up to international standards. Moreover, the Office is seeking to provide Russian-language documentation and a Russian-speaking public information focal point for a number of countries, including some in Central Asia.

In consultation with the Government, UNHCR will pursue efforts to find a durable solution to a protracted caseload of "legacy cases" (mainly

Afghans), whose international protection needs were recognized by UNHCR prior to the handover of status-determination responsibilities to the Russian authorities in 2008, but who have been unable to fully regularize their situation within the national system. Efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness will continue through advocacy.

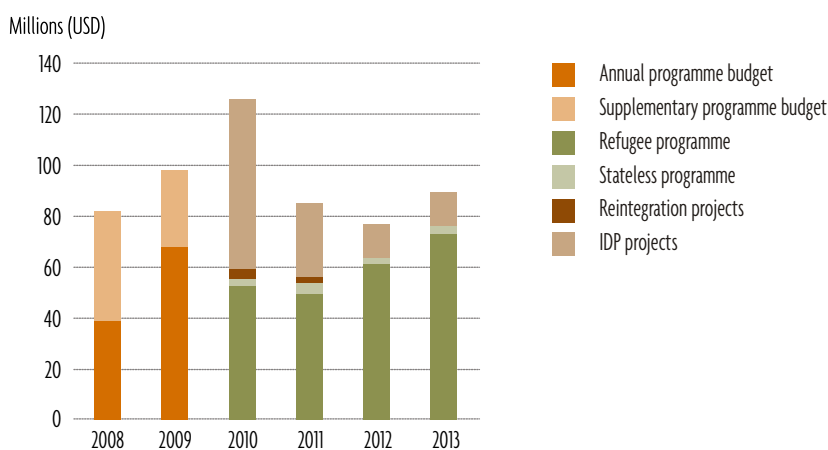
UNHCR will complement federal and local government endeavours in the north Caucasus (where it has phased out its direct assistance programmes for IDPs) through protection partnerships in the Russian Federation in support of asylum-seekers and people in a refugee-like situation, stateless persons and those returning voluntarily from abroad.

Finally, UNHCR will activate governmental and private-sector partnerships in the Russian Federation to raise awareness of displacement issues, promote advocacy and enhance financial support for the cause of the displaced worldwide.

Financial information

In 2013, the requirements for the subregion stand at USD 89.2 million of which more than three-quarters will be spent in aid of refugees, asylum-seekers and the building of asylum systems, with lesser amounts for IDPs and statelessness people. While there is a slight net decrease in the requirements for IDPs due to a scaling down of UNHCR operations in this area, overall needs have increased due to the steadily growing requirements for refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly in view of the refugee emergency in Turkey caused by the events in the Syrian Arab Republic.

UNHCR's budget in Eastern Europe 2008 – 2013



UNHCR's budget in Eastern Europe (USD)

OPERATION	2012 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2012)	2013			TOTAL
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	
Armenia	4,448,602	4,051,310	70,000	0	4,121,310
Azerbaijan	5,916,430	4,527,791	323,577	1,048,634	5,900,002
Georgia	14,959,095	2,128,385	802,505	12,027,628	14,958,518
Russian Federation	10,094,175	7,737,377	593,503	0	8,330,881
Turkey	32,256,776	42,901,349	173,391	0	43,074,740
Ukraine Regional Office ¹	9,207,759	11,499,055	1,315,000	0	12,814,055
Total	76,882,836	72,845,268	3,277,976	13,076,262	89,199,506

¹Includes activities in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova.