

In Lampedusa's harbour, Italy, a patrol boat returns with asylum-seekers from a search and rescue mission in the Mediterranean Sea.



EUROPE

| WORKING ENVIRONMENT |

UNHCR's work in Europe is wide-ranging: from promoting fair and efficient asylum systems to facilitating local integration, from providing protection in mixed migration contexts to emergency interventions, and to the search for durable solutions. It also extends to providing protection and other forms of support to internally displaced people (IDPs), resettling refugees, addressing and preventing statelessness and addressing xenophobia and racism. Advocacy with States and national institutions and engagement with civil society and the media are equally important activities.

UNHCR's European operational region includes 48 countries with which it works bilaterally and through liaison and cooperation with the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). All countries in Europe are party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, with Turkey maintaining a geographical reservation. In 2010, European public and private donors provided more than 40 per cent of UNHCR's annual funding.

With the planned completion of the Common European Asylum System at the end of 2012, the EU intends to establish a comprehensive legal and practical framework for asylum in its 27 Member States. Countries which are candidates for EU membership strive to bring their laws and procedures into line with those of the European Union. Nearly all European countries are also parties to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Some European countries still face complex issues concerning nationality and statelessness, mainly linked to state succession. Of the 48 States in Europe, however, only 32 are party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. With Croatia's accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in 2010, Europe now has 20 States Parties to this instrument.

There is an increase in populist rhetoric against foreigners in many European countries, and xenophobia and racism are affecting the lives of asylum-seekers, refugees and others of concern. UNHCR is seeking to address this problem through new partnerships and approaches to strengthen integration policies and systems in Europe.

In 2010, Europe hosted some 15 per cent of the world's refugees (1.59 million) and received about a third of the world's asylum-seekers (some 302,800 people), a slight increase from 2009. Although it has received less than 2 per cent of people displaced from North African countries in 2011, population movements across the Mediterranean have dominated the public asylum debate in Europe. UNHCR has called on States to demonstrate solidarity by providing financial support to the countries hosting displaced people in North Africa – but also to undertake resettlement as an important responsibility-sharing mechanism. The death by drowning of an estimated 2,000 people has highlighted the need for more effective arrangements for rescue-at-sea, and its importance as a central protection issue for all Mediterranean States.

In the first half of 2011, the 38 countries in Europe for which UNHCR compiles statistics received 144,000 applications for asylum, a 16 per cent increase over the same period in 2010. Of these, the 27 EU Member States registered some 123,400 asylum claims, an overall increase due mainly to the events in North Africa.

The largest number of asylum-seekers in Europe originate from Afghanistan, followed by Serbia and Iraq. In the first half of 2011, France, Germany, Italy and Belgium received the largest numbers of asylum applications in Europe. In 2010, international protection was granted in some 55,000 cases, with Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom accepting the largest numbers.

| Strategic priorities in 2012 |

◦ Enhance protection through the improvement of asylum systems

Access to territory, as well as to fair and efficient asylum procedures, remains a high priority in Europe. Strengthened border

control measures, accelerated procedures, readmission agreements and strict approaches to transfers under the Dublin Regulation can lead to situations where people are not provided with the international protection to which they are entitled. By working with the EU border agency Frontex and with States, UNHCR will advocate for the incorporation of protection safeguards in migration-control measures and instruments, including rescue-at-sea.

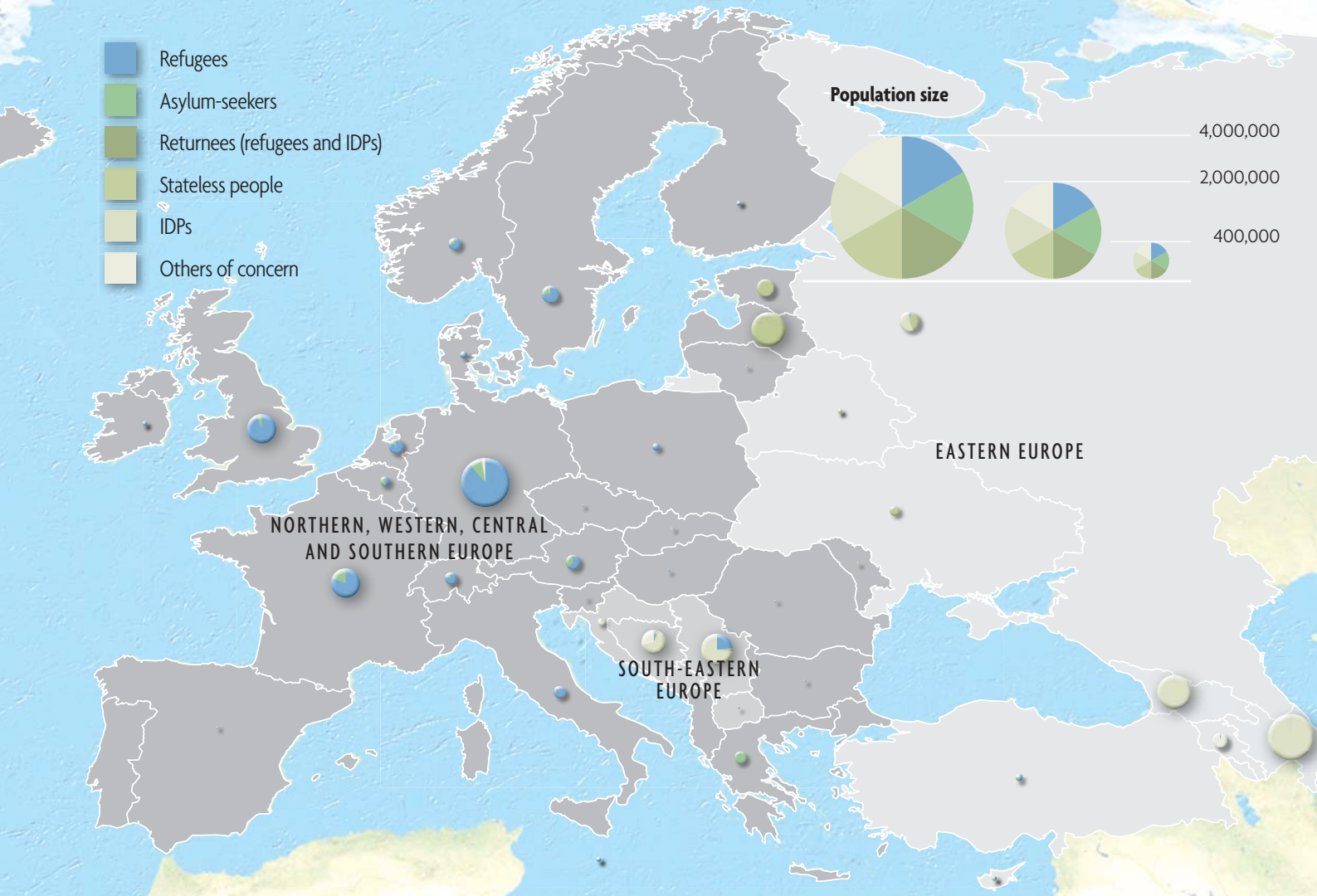
UNHCR will also monitor detention conditions and encourage States to explore alternatives to the detention of asylum-seekers, including the establishment of adequate reception facilities. Particular attention will be given to the special needs of unaccompanied children in the asylum process.

While the EU has made progress with the development of a Common European Asylum System, a lack of consistency remains a key challenge, as demonstrated by the widely diverging recognition rates for similar groups of asylum-seekers. UNHCR will therefore work intensively with EU Member States and institutions, including the newly established European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in Malta. In close cooperation with EASO, UNHCR will continue to help Greece to build its asylum system through participation in the first and second instance decision-making bodies in addition to providing its authorities with advice and support in the fields of training, the quality of procedures and other key areas.

Given the varying levels of development among asylum systems in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, UNHCR will continue to advise governments on legislative and institutional development. Such advice is vital in view of the increasing number of new asylum-seekers arriving in mixed migration movements to and through the region.

Significant developments are expected in Turkey with the anticipated adoption of asylum legislation which will introduce a legal framework in compliance with basic international standards, including principles of non-discrimination and *non-refoulement*. The rights-based approach reflected in the new legislation will enable asylum applicants to have access to basic services. UNHCR plans to help strengthen Turkey's technical capacity required to implement the new legislation and to assist in drafting secondary legislation. Renewed efforts will be made to streamline processes to shorten waiting periods for asylum-seekers, and to keep pace with growing demand in Turkey.

UNHCR will continue its judicial engagement throughout Europe at national and



regional levels in areas where key international protection issues are at stake.

○ *Support durable and sustainable solutions for refugees and IDPs*

Solutions for both refugees and IDPs include voluntary return and local integration, in which UNHCR will play a well-defined protection role and seek to engage other actors in the long-term integration process.

In South-eastern Europe, UNHCR will contribute to durable solutions for people still displaced by the 1991-1995 conflict in the Western Balkans by increasing advocacy, reinforcing protection, and mobilizing the support of the international community and development actors.

With the support of the High Commissioner's Personal Envoy and of key donors, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia have revived the Sarajevo process, and agreed to resolve the displacement issues remaining from the 1991-1995 conflict. In cooperation with the EU and OSCE, a regional multi-donor trust fund will be established to help the remaining displaced populations.

While reducing its operational involvement, UNHCR will further support this process through its protection, monitoring and

advisory role. It will continue to help governments to address the needs of those who still require assistance to integrate in their place of origin or of displacement. In this context, UNHCR will mobilize support from development-oriented actors.

In Eastern Europe, UNHCR will endeavour to eliminate the obstacles which hinder the self-reliance and integration of refugees, such as inadequate legal status and limited prospects for employment, aggravated by lack of housing. Direct assistance to people of concern will be provided as resources permit.

In Georgia, UNHCR will build on progress in achieving durable solutions for refugees through naturalization, in combination with development programmes supported by UNDP. It is envisaged that UNHCR's partnership with UNDP and the Government will be expanded to provide assistance to other groups in need in various parts of the country.

UNHCR's involvement with IDPs in Azerbaijan and Georgia will complement the efforts of the Governments, which have assumed primary responsibility for protecting and assisting their respective internally displaced populations. In the Russian Federation, UNHCR has now ended its direct assistance to IDPs in the North Caucasus region.

Financial information

The 2012 comprehensive budget for Europe of USD 181.5 million represents a decrease of 13 per cent compared to the 2011 revised budget and a further decrease of nearly 29 per cent compared to the 2010 revised budget. This is mainly due to continued reductions in some larger operations in Eastern and South-eastern Europe. The majority of the operational budget in this region is foreseen for refugees (68 per cent), with another 6 per cent for stateless people, some 4 per cent for reintegration activities and 22 per cent for IDPs. In 2013, budgetary requirements for operations in Europe will amount to USD 166.8 million.

Mobilizing development actors will also serve to support long-term solutions, and ensure that the interests and needs of refugees and other displaced people are included in national development programmes.

UNHCR will continue to promote more European engagement in resettlement, and will work with the EU and individual States to expand resettlement opportunities and promote the successful integration of resettled refugees. Resettlement from some European countries is still needed, notably from Turkey, due to its geographic reservation which restricts its obligations under the 1951 Convention. UNHCR will continue to assess applications for refugee status from non-European citizens in Turkey, and will seek resettlement for those recognized as refugees.

○ Prevent and resolve situations of statelessness

The intergovernmental meeting at ministerial level, taking place in December 2011, will be followed by further engagement with States on questions relating to accession and implementation of the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. In Europe, priority will be given to the identification of stateless people, as well as documentation and prevention of statelessness.

In South-Eastern Europe, a conference in October 2011 on the provision of civil documentation and on birth registration is addressing the difficulties that some Roma and other minority populations are experiencing with accessing the required documents and subsequently all their rights as full citizens. UNHCR and its partners will work to find more effective mechanisms for civil registration in the region and support other efforts designed to prevent and reduce statelessness.

○ Address xenophobia and racism with new partnerships and strengthen integration policies

Another of UNHCR's priorities in Europe is to address and combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The challenge of managing culturally diverse societies and changed migration patterns has placed a strain on existing social structures. In a number of countries, populist movements have reacted to these changes, and increased their xenophobic and racist rhetoric.

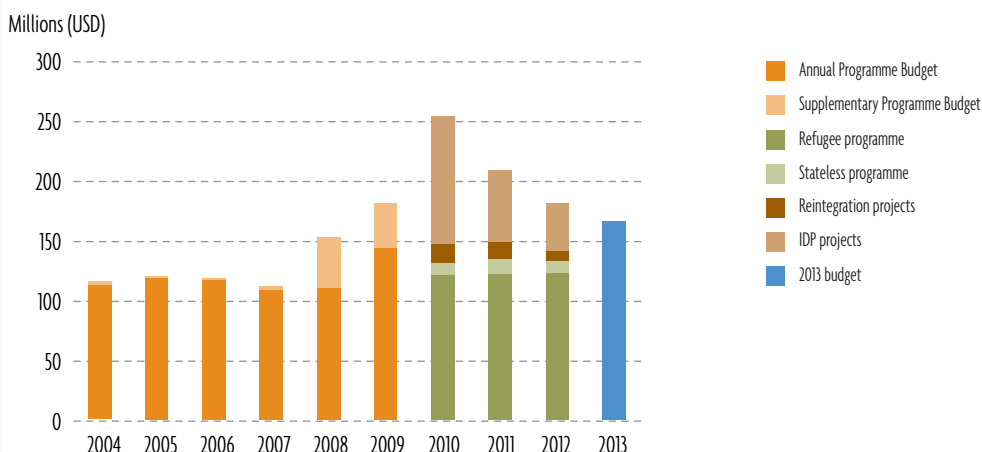
UNHCR will work closely with key institutions, media and partners from civil society in Europe and appeal to all States to address decisively all manifestations of racism, including hate crime and speech, and to strengthen integration policies. A Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, signed in 2011, will contribute to these efforts.

○ Mobilize support

UNHCR will continue its close cooperation with key partners at the national and regional level. These include the EU institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the ICRC and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, and many others. It will further strengthen its partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as they are the main civil society actors on protection issues, as well as in counselling and integration.

Across Europe, UNHCR will engage with governmental and private-sector donors, and

UNHCR's budget in Europe 2004 - 2013



UNHCR BUDGET IN EUROPE | USD

Operations	2011 Revised budget	2012				Total	2013
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects		
EASTERN EUROPE							
Armenia	3,451,602	4,308,834	138,768	0	0	4,447,602	4,250,602
Azerbaijan	5,933,021	4,296,141	384,516	0	1,234,275	5,914,932	5,921,150
Georgia	18,635,733	2,074,376	736,931	0	12,142,791	14,954,098	14,323,384
Russian Federation	24,308,250	9,583,476	506,698	0	0	10,090,175	10,756,000
Turkey	20,398,318	18,914,165	44,000	0	0	18,958,165	20,440,000
Ukraine Regional Office	11,080,404	8,547,574	653,685	0	0	9,201,259	9,278,201
Subtotal	83,807,328	47,724,567	2,464,598	0	13,377,066	63,566,230	64,969,337
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE							
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17,520,923	4,428,850	1,809,413	0	8,786,737	15,025,000	9,154,490
Croatia	6,870,298	1,396,162	351,907	3,251,931	0	5,000,000	5,000,000
Montenegro	5,481,469	4,204,320	341,558	0	0	4,545,878	4,249,999
Serbia (and Kosovo: SC Res. 1244)	42,246,910	10,124,995	1,991,985	4,862,864	18,020,157	35,000,000	28,250,000
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3,512,808	3,626,670	356,975	0	0	3,983,645	3,983,645
Total	75,632,408	23,780,997	4,851,837	8,114,795	26,806,893	63,554,523	50,638,135
NORTHERN, WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE¹							
Belgium Regional Office	12,840,977	13,918,971	1,317,258	0	0	15,236,229	13,571,750
Hungary Regional Office	9,822,606	10,291,749	828,957	0	0	11,120,706	11,273,614
Italy Regional Office	19,079,384	18,650,511	142,584	0	0	18,793,095	17,942,502
Spain	1,595,952	1,442,586	76,315	0	0	1,518,901	1,424,100
Sweden Regional Office	2,773,516	2,173,852	610,039	0	0	2,783,891	2,737,323
Regional Activities	3,775,083	4,954,155	0	0	0	4,954,155	4,286,880
Subtotal	49,887,519	51,431,824	2,975,154	0	0	54,406,978	51,236,170
Total	209,327,256	122,937,388	10,291,589	8,114,795	40,183,959	181,527,731	166,843,641

¹ As of 2012, Central Europe is reported as part of Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe.

with the public, to promote understanding of forced displacement issues, and to mobilize resources for displacement mitigation operations worldwide.

| Challenges |

Solidarity and responsibility-sharing within Europe and with refugee-hosting countries outside Europe, remains a high priority for UNHCR. A more balanced responsibility-sharing mechanism in Europe will require more advocacy with and support for countries such as Greece, which are under particular pressure. The reform and completion of the Common European Asylum System will require a strong common vision and greater impetus if it is to be completed by the end of 2012.

The Arab Spring has not only generated migratory pressures, but also significant opportunities in the Mediterranean region. The fundamental changes in the region need to be approached with increased solidarity, including more vigorous resettlement efforts where required.

Restrictive asylum policies, combined with an increase in rhetoric against foreigners, asylum-seekers and refugees has in some cases made access more difficult and reduced the protection space in Europe. Wherever asylum-seekers and refugees are portrayed as a threat to security and well-being, it is important to highlight that refugees are themselves threatened, and that they can be great assets in their new communities. ■