

# SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

UNHCR

2014 - 2015  
GLOBAL APPEAL

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Croatia

Montenegro

Serbia (and Kosovo:  
Security Council Resolution  
1244 (1999))

The former Yugoslav  
Republic of Macedonia



IDP children are delighted  
with a Lego donation to their  
class in Zemun Polje, on the  
outskirts of Belgrade, Serbia  
(2012)

UNHCR



# Overview



## Working environment

The countries that comprise the western Balkans are still coping with the consequences of large-scale displacement caused by the conflicts in the region in the 1990s. In addition, persisting social and economic challenges continue to drive the movement of nationals within and from the region, primarily to the European Union.

The European Union-facilitated agreement between the authorities in Pristina and Belgrade on the principles for normalization of relations has made a major contribution to the stability of the region. Indeed, gradual political stabilization has transformed the western Balkans into a region of transit and, increasingly, a destination for migrants and refugees from other parts of the world. There has been a significant increase in the number of asylum applications in the region.

Many asylum-seekers lodge asylum claims in one of the western Balkans countries. However for a variety of reasons, including lengthy refugee status determination procedures and weak asylum regimes, many often move on before having their protection needs determined. Of particular concern is the growing number of unaccompanied and/or separated children travelling irregularly. Most countries in the subregion do not have solutions frameworks in place to address the needs of newly arriving refugees and other groups with specific needs from outside the region.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia continue their efforts under the framework of the Regional Housing Programme to find sustainable housing solutions for some 74,000 vulnerable refugees, returnees and IDPs from the 1991-1995 conflicts. Funds for

the programme were pledged at a donors' conference in Sarajevo in April 2012.

More than 200,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), including some 80,000 members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) minority groups, remain in need of durable solutions in the region. The Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244(1999)) are also striving to develop and implement solutions for those vulnerable IDPs whose needs will not be covered by the Regional Housing Programme. UNHCR is focusing its technical assistance and support for the authorities on providing decent housing for the most vulnerable, many of whom live in collective centres and substandard private accommodation.

The lack of civil registration and documentation for some 20,000 stateless people or individuals of undetermined

nationality hinders their access to rights and solutions in South-Eastern Europe. In October 2011, during the Conference on the provision of civil documentation and registration in South-Eastern Europe, UNHCR encouraged countries to accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. This conference,

sponsored by the European Union, the OSCE and UNHCR set out the framework for national, bilateral and regional dialogue and practical cooperation to resolve the civil-registration and nationality-determination issues of people at risk of statelessness, many of whom belong to the Roma minority.

## | Response |

### Strategies

- A key priority for UNHCR will be to work towards the progressive assumption of responsibility by the Governments in the region for people of concern to UNHCR. UNHCR will also seek to enhance these Governments' cooperation in implementing comprehensive durable solutions strategies. The four Governments in the region will receive UNHCR's support to implement their commitments within the Sarajevo Process to overcome the remaining displacement challenges in the region and to secure durable solutions for those affected by the 1991-1995 conflicts. Protection monitoring by UNHCR in the context of the Regional Housing Programme will ensure sustainable solutions for the most vulnerable. Meanwhile, UNHCR will continue discussions with concerned Governments on appropriate ways to end refugee status for those no longer in need of it.
- UNHCR will advocate for the necessary resources, monitor protection and provide technical assistance to aid governments and national civil-society partners developing durable solutions for IDPs whose needs have not been met. Governments in the region will receive support to develop comprehensive and protection-sensitive asylum and migration systems. This will help promote a rights-based approach to irregular migration to ensure that people seeking international protection are identified within mixed migration flows and that their protection needs are adequately addressed.
- UNHCR will also promote accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness among those States still not party to it. It will engage in advocacy for legislation to facilitate late registration of birth and residence, as well as the issuance of civil registration and identity documents, with a focus on minority groups. Individuals who are stateless or of undetermined nationality will receive aid to acquire identity documents and confirm or acquire citizenship.

### Challenges

Most governments in the region have adopted legislation in line with international norms, but implementation is often inadequate. Difficulties in applying for asylum at borders, inadequate reception conditions and the lack of procedural safeguards in the refugee status determination process pose serious challenges. In addition, exceptionally low recognition rates in the region (Croatia excepted) discourage people in need of protection. Asylum systems in the region were unprepared for the recent sharp rise in the number of new asylum-seekers.

The economic situation remains difficult throughout the region. Discrimination against displaced people in the job market and high unemployment rates limit any prospects for the local integration of vulnerable refugees and IDPs. Inter-ethnic relations also continue to pose challenges in many countries, while the global financial crisis has made it difficult to secure funding for governments to run durable solutions plans. The lack of adequate housing, birth registration and personal documentation, as well as insufficient access to health care and social assistance, hinder access to rights for groups that face discrimination.

## Operations

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** still hosts 103,000 registered IDPs, of whom 8,600 live in collective centres, often in undignified conditions and without access to basic socio-economic rights. These people require support to find durable solutions. A multi-stakeholder partnership on the implementation of the revised strategy for the implementation of Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement, adopted in 2010, is expected to help align the resources of national and international actors around shared priorities. UNHCR's monitoring role in the Regional Housing Programme and the Bosnian Government's social housing project for collective centre residents has spurred national actors to seek sustainable solutions for the most vulnerable.

To overcome the administrative and bureaucratic hurdles of registering birth and citizenship, UNHCR supports the provision of free legal aid for people at risk of statelessness. It is also helping to build the national capacity to combat statelessness while advocating for greater rights for stateless individuals and their civil registration. UNHCR is pressing for simplified documentation procedures and a clear statelessness determination mechanism explicitly set out in law. Some 4,500 people belonging to the Roma minority group still have unresolved status and are unable to enjoy basic rights.

In **Croatia**, UNHCR has enhanced its cooperation with the Government on the implementation of the comprehensive durable solutions strategy for the remaining refugees in the country. With its recent accession to the European Union, Croatia is bound by EU norms. The regional initiative on refugee protection and international migration in the western Balkans which UNHCR has introduced in

cooperation with IOM, could assist Croatia to respond to the increasing number of people seeking asylum and transiting through Croatia. It offers a framework, *inter alia*, for the establishment of protection-sensitive entry management and fair and efficient procedures to identify and address people's needs in a differentiated manner. In addition to monitoring the refugee status determination process, UNHCR provides free legal aid to all asylum-seekers.

The Government of **Montenegro's** European Union accession negotiations give UNHCR an opportunity to provide expertise and perform a monitoring role *vis-à-vis* people of concern. This will include training RSD and asylum reception-centre staff as well supporting the Government's efforts to integrate recognized refugees. Ensuring protection-sensitive border management and sufficient and adequate reception conditions are key priorities in Montenegro, which has faced a sharp increase in the number of asylum-seekers in recent years.

UNHCR is also helping the Government of Montenegro to fully implement its Strategy for Durable Solutions, which allows refugees from the former Yugoslavia to apply for the new legal status of foreigner with permanent residence. Another key priority is to aid applications for legal status by IDPs from Kosovo, who may require financial assistance to complete the process. UNHCR's strategy for the prevention and reduction of statelessness focuses on Montenegro's accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, alongside changes in its national legislation concerning procedures for late registration and naturalization. UNHCR also provides free legal aid to stateless people availing themselves of registration and naturalization procedures.

In **the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, UNHCR's strategy

is to secure durable solutions for some 1,100 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) individuals, mainly through voluntary return and local integration, including naturalization. It also provides humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable people of concern. With the increase in mixed-migration movements of people from countries outside the region, UNHCR is supporting the Government in the areas of asylum, border control, migration and readmission, and advocating for the country to build and maintain asylum practices based on full compliance with the 1951 Refugee Convention and international standards.

UNHCR continues to advocate for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's accession to the 1961 Convention on Reduction of Statelessness and the Government's support for the civil registration and recognition of citizenship and/or naturalization of some 900 people, mostly Roma, who are at risk of becoming stateless. It is pressing for the establishment of a statelessness determination procedure at the national level. Efforts to increase the capacity of the asylum, migration and citizenship authorities as well as the judiciary and NGOs also receive strong UNHCR support.

In 2011, **Serbia** identified 97,000 IDPs in need of durable solutions. In 2014, UNHCR estimates that 88,000 will still need assistance, mainly with housing, to aid their local integration. UNHCR's primary role, in addition to assisting the authorities in addressing these needs, will be to garner more donor support for the most vulnerable IDPs. Special emphasis is being given to the closure of collective centres, which is a priority for the Government. UNHCR will also pursue its monitoring of the Regional Housing Programme, which aims to shelter some 45,000 vulnerable refugees.

In 2011, Serbia acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. UNHCR helps the Serbian authorities to remove the conditions that create statelessness, primarily among the most marginalized Roma populations. UNHCR also strives to build the capacity of the national authorities and other stakeholders to respond to mixed movements and safeguard asylum space.

A priority for UNHCR in **Kosovo** (S/RES/1244(1999)) is to strengthen the asylum system. As part of the European integration process, Kosovo needs to align its legislation with European and international

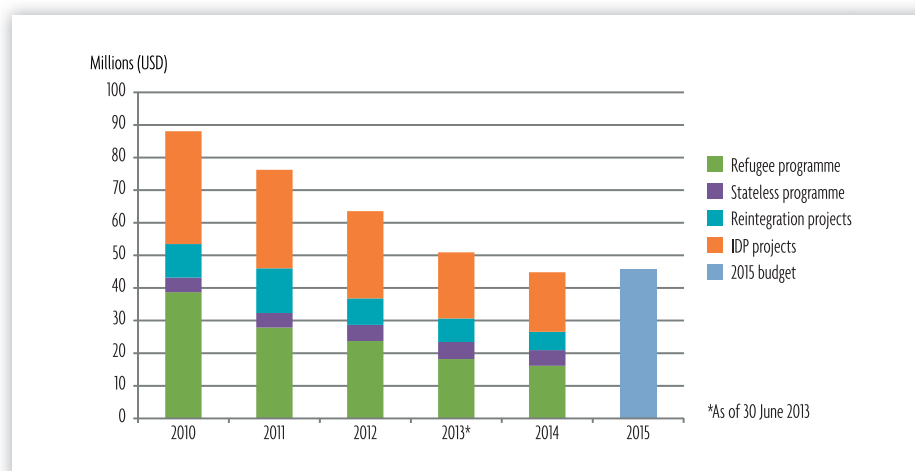
standards. UNHCR's efforts are therefore geared towards building the capacity of the authorities to manage mixed migratory flows efficiently, enabling them to identify individuals who may be in need of international protection. UNHCR is also committed to reinforcing the capacity of the authorities to prevent, identify and solve situations of statelessness. In this respect, legal assistance to secure proper birth registration and documentation for people of concern will accompany UNHCR's technical support and capacity building among relevant branches of the Kosovo administration. A final priority is the elaboration of

a strategy for durable solutions that brings together humanitarian and development actors under the ownership of the competent Kosovo authorities. This would contribute to ending displacement in and from Kosovo in a sustainable manner. Moreover, UNHCR will support community-level reconciliation through a network of civil-society organizations and local NGOs established during the implementation of the Kosovo Women's Initiative, established in July 1999, with the objective of empowering women, including the most vulnerable, and addressing structural and legal issues for women.

## Financial information

In recent years, the financial requirements for the South-Eastern Europe subregion have declined steadily due to the progressive downscaling of operations as States took more responsibility for the implementation of durable solutions and UNHCR moved its focus to protection monitoring. In 2014, the financial requirements are set at USD 44.8 million, a reduction of USD 6.1 million when compared with the revised 2013 budget. Of note, within the 2014 budget, USD 16.1 million is allocated for the refugee programme and USD 18.3 million for protection and assistance for IDPs.

### Budgets for South-Eastern Europe | 2010–2015



### Budgets for South-Eastern Europe | USD

Operation	2013 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2013)	2014				TOTAL	2015
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9,154,993	2,700,000	1,079,518	0	5,620,483	9,400,001	10,399,999
Croatia	5,000,500	1,367,495	481,922	1,758,961	0	3,608,377	3,608,377
Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999))	8,967,393	2,395,555	1,171,493	3,836,667	219,107	7,622,823	7,474,981
Montenegro	4,546,379	4,285,770	238,937	0	0	4,524,706	4,524,706
Serbia	19,250,806	2,406,084	1,382,441	0	12,445,465	16,233,990	16,218,241
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	3,984,144	2,978,042	466,226	0	0	3,444,268	3,444,268
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,904,215</b>	<b>16,132,946</b>	<b>4,820,537</b>	<b>5,595,628</b>	<b>18,285,055</b>	<b>44,834,165</b>	<b>45,670,573</b>