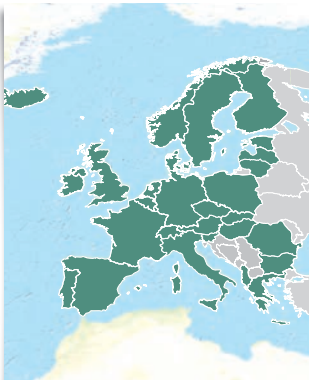


NORTHERN, WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE



UNHCR

2014 - 2015
GLOBAL APPEAL

- Albania
- Andorra
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Holy See (The)
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Monaco
- Netherlands (The)
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- San Marino
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (The)

A Chadian asylum-seeker with his registration papers in a room he shares with 11 others in Dijon, France (March 2013)

UNHCR / J. TANNER



Overview



Working environment

The 36 countries in this subregion have long traditions of refugee protection, strong legal frameworks and, for the majority of them, functioning national asylum systems. Nevertheless, different legal traditions and asylum and migration experiences shape the protection landscape of each country. Croatia, which became the 28th member-State of the European Union in July 2013, is the newest participant in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

The most significant development in 2013 was the adoption of amended European Union legislation on asylum and the reception of asylum-seekers. The recast statutes, which will require extensive transposition at the national level in 2014, strengthen protection standards in the region. However, discrepancies in implementation persist, leading to protection gaps in some countries and posing challenges to the functioning of the CEAS. These include challenges in the application of the Dublin III Regulation, which determines which Member State

is responsible for examining an asylum application.

The trend of rising numbers of asylum applications in the region in 2011 and 2012 continued in the first half of 2013. The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), in particular, has increased demand for asylum throughout the region. Germany and Sweden were the most affected, with the two countries receiving more than 50 per cent of Syrian applications.

Germany was the recipient of the largest number of asylum applications overall in the region in 2013, followed by France and Sweden.

While Syrians now form the second-largest group of applicants, the biggest and still increasing group comprises people from the Russian Federation. Afghans and Serbian asylum-seekers are the third- and fourth-largest groups, respectively. Also among those seeking asylum each year are stateless people. There are currently an

estimated 436,000 stateless people in the region.

Ensuring access to asylum for refugees, including at sea or land borders, remains a challenge. UNHCR calls on States to fulfil their international protection obligations when faced with irregular migration. There is little distinction in public debate between irregular migrants and refugees, and the economic crisis has also had a negative impact on the public perception of migrants. It has reduced refugees' chances of finding jobs and limited the availability of resources to build or strengthen asylum and protection systems. In this difficult operational environment, UNHCR must continue to engage governments and the institutions of the European Union to sustain access to asylum; improve the quality of asylum adjudication; promote fair and efficient asylum systems; develop and clarify legal standards; and find durable solutions, including integration, for refugees and stateless people.

Strategies

- UNHCR will help governments and other partners to build and maintain fair and efficient asylum and protection systems.
- To safeguard asylum space in the broader migration context, UNHCR will work to ensure that border management is more protection-sensitive. It will make every effort to see detention is only utilized as a last resort. It will also advocate for reception conditions – including for asylum-seekers with special needs, such as unaccompanied and separated children and victims of trafficking or trauma – that meet minimum international standards.
- UNHCR will advocate for more resettlement places and enhanced integration capacity in resettlement countries, as well as the implementation of local-integration projects for the approximately 1.6 million refugees in the region.
- To prevent and resolve situations of statelessness, the Office will continue to urge States to accede to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions and improve mechanisms to identify stateless people.

Operations

UNHCR will achieve its objectives in the subregion through a multi-faceted strategy of standard-setting, advocacy and partnerships. Comments on legislation, comparative analyses and judicial engagement will allow UNHCR to contribute to the setting of legal standards at the national and regional levels. Monitoring and reporting on national practices, and comparison through multi-country studies, will facilitate gap analysis and identification of good practice. UNHCR will engage in dialogue with all levels of government and regional institutions; hold consultations with refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people; and collaborate with civil society and new stakeholders. Country operations will build on UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity commitments and encourage meaningful participation of refugees in the planning and implementation of government programmes

- UNHCR will support European Union policy-making processes related to people of concern and mobilize political and financial support in the region for its work worldwide.

Challenges

The economic difficulties being felt throughout the region have had an impact on the ability and readiness of many countries to strengthen protection, while budgetary restrictions have affected the civil-society organizations that provide services and support to asylum-seekers and refugees. Xenophobia and related intolerance have led to incidents of discrimination and violence in some countries. Coupled with conflicts in neighbouring countries and heightened sensitivities to new influxes of asylum-seekers these concerns have, at times, led to States giving precedence to curbing irregular movement, including through tighter border control and detention and penalization for illegal entry, over their international protection obligations.

| Implementation |

Safeguard asylum space in the broader migration context

UNHCR's operations in the subregion work to ensure that arrivals with protection needs are referred to the appropriate authorities. With the current scale of humanitarian crises, more arrivals in the subregion can be expected. A particular focus will be on people arriving by sea. By monitoring admission practices and building the capacity of immigration and coast guard officials, UNHCR will aim to avert the risk of *refoulement*. Border-monitoring projects will also continue in the three **Baltic States, Italy** and **Spain** as well as in **Central Europe**. UNHCR will organize the third International Summer School on refugee law for border guards in **France** in addition to cross-border cooperation meetings and events. UNHCR will work with **Belgium** to map practices related to the referral of victims of trafficking, and with specialized counterparts in **Spain** to identify trafficking victims at entry points.

Adequate reception conditions and procedures that are capable of responding to the specific needs of asylum-seekers are essential components of a quality asylum system. UNHCR will continue to work to ensure dignified reception standards, including the use of detention only as a measure of last resort.

In **Cyprus** and **Portugal**, UNHCR will provide direct support to asylum-seekers with special needs. In **Malta** the office will work with the Government to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of detention. Alternatives to detention will be promoted more widely, including in **Belgium** and all countries under the purview of the Dublin Regulation. In the **United Kingdom**, UNHCR will advocate for a more protection-focused approach taking account of their special needs to asylum-seekers in detention whose applications are being fast-tracked. In **Finland**, the findings of the 2013 Age, Gender and Diversity

consultations will be implemented and participatory approaches relating to the reception system will be promoted throughout the Nordic and Baltic countries.

The specific needs of some asylum-seekers, particularly unaccompanied and separated children, will be given priority by UNHCR throughout the region. The best interest of each child will remain the primary consideration in all decisions affecting him or her, including those taken within the context of the Dublin Regulation. A UNHCR-supported drop-in centre in Patras, **Greece**, will be dedicated to assisting unaccompanied children who are in transit and are facing serious protection risks.

UNHCR offices in **Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia** and the **United Kingdom** will follow up on the *Response to Vulnerability* project. Standard operating procedures will be instituted in reception centres to respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Build and maintain effective asylum and protection systems

UNHCR has long sought to improve the quality of adjudication by first-instance asylum bodies in the region, and will continue to work with governments to implement quality audit mechanisms. A special emphasis will be placed on child-friendly asylum procedures, including mechanisms to determine the best interest of the child. UNHCR will advocate for more awareness of the links between trafficking and asylum, protection needs related to female genital mutilation, and the use of safe third-country or safe country of asylum concepts.

In 2013 UNHCR published *Beyond Proof*, a comprehensive analysis of credibility assessment in the European Union asylum system. A follow-up study on the credibility assessment in child asylum cases will be completed in 2014.

UNHCR will continue to complement the efforts of the European Asylum Support Office to improve practical cooperation among EU Member States in the building of asylum systems and improve the quality of country-of-origin information. Interpreters will be trained in **Austria**, the **Czech Republic** and other countries. UNHCR will create networks of legal practitioners and encourage improvements in legal aid, particularly in **Spain** and **Austria**. In **Albania**, UNHCR will provide direct legal assistance to asylum-seekers.

In 2014, UNHCR will publish a manual on case law from regional courts in Europe. It will continue to support the Conference of Refugee Law Judges in **Germany** and the yearly Summer School for Border Guards in Strasbourg. UNHCR will participate in the asylum adjudication process in **Spain, France** and **Italy**. In **Greece**, UNHCR will provide direct operational support to the authorities engaged in the reform of the asylum procedure.

To aid the transposition of the newly adopted legal standards of the CEAS, UNHCR will comment on law and share legal analysis with stakeholders at the national level, in addition to advocating for full implementation of existing legal standards. Judicial engagement and court interventions will permit UNHCR to ensure the correct application of relevant laws in refugee cases. To this end, and particularly with the operation of the Dublin Regulation in mind, UNHCR's operations will continue to make recommendations to national asylum authorities.

Increase the number of resettlement places and enhance reception and integration capacity in resettlement countries, in addition to improving local integration prospects for some 1.6 million refugees in the region

21 of the 37 countries in the subregion contribute to UNHCR's

global resettlement efforts, 16 of them by operating an annual resettlement programme. Despite this, the number of resettlement places in the region is limited compared with the global number of resettlement places, with quotas and reception and integration capacity varying widely among countries. UNHCR will work to secure larger resettlement quotas and strengthen national capacities for reception and integration through the joint UNHCR-IOM-ICMC Emergency Resettlement Project, which is funded by the European Union. The project promotes good practice through its dedicated website and is helping build a resettlement practitioners' network.

Special attention will be devoted to resettlement and humanitarian admission of Syrian refugees in 2014. UNHCR will continue to manage the emergency transit centres in Timisoara (**Romania**) and Humenne (**Slovakia**). The centres host refugees eligible for resettlement who are in urgent need of evacuation to a safe place where their resettlement procedures can be finalized.

The local integration of refugees and others with protection status is central to effective asylum systems. UNHCR's operations will raise awareness of the particular challenges to integration faced by refugees, as highlighted in the research carried out in selected countries in 2013 under the EU-funded *Refugee Integration: Capacity and Evaluation* project. The integration evaluation tool, the use of which was piloted in Central Europe, will help governments to assess the quality of their integration programmes and identify gaps.

To aid integration, UNHCR will promote good practices in relation to labour market integration, housing and the building of social and professional networks. Awareness campaigns will highlight the particular problems of young people.

Prevent and resolve situations of statelessness

UNHCR will use the opportunity provided by the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Statelessness Convention in 2014 to advocate for accession to the Statelessness Conventions in the 16 countries of the region that have yet to sign. Studies have been undertaken in 12 countries and in particular in **Belgium**, the **Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom** in order to fully assess the scope of statelessness issues and gaps in the protection of stateless people. The absence of statelessness determination procedures in most countries has been identified as one particular gap that needs to be filled. In countries where procedures are in place, such as **France, Hungary, Italy, Spain** and the **United Kingdom**, UNHCR

will work with the authorities to improve quality of decision making. Related efforts will emphasize reform of nationality law, birth registration and the facilitation of naturalization. Cooperation with the European Network on Statelessness in advocacy and training initiatives in the region will continue.

Strengthen UNHCR's external relations and mobilize support for the work of UNHCR worldwide

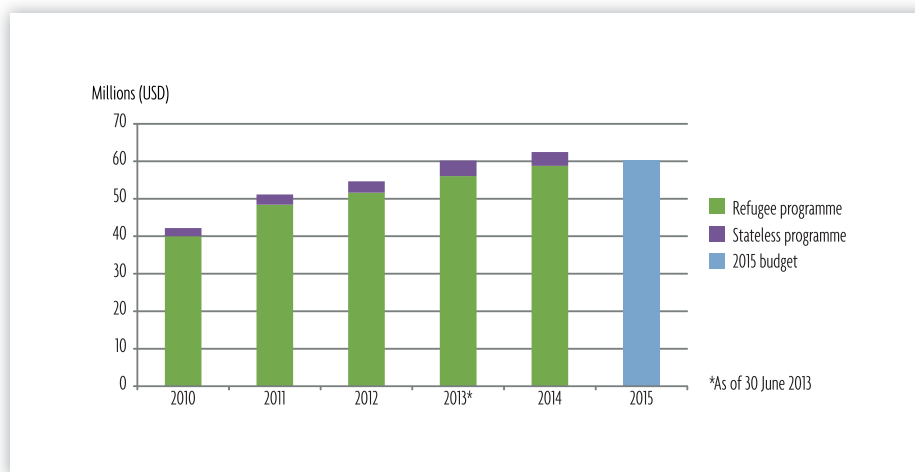
UNHCR's operations in the subregion play an important role in raising awareness of its work and the needs of refugees worldwide. Within Europe, attitudes towards people of concern to the organization are often linked to national debates about migration, both legal and illegal.

In times of economic crisis, high unemployment and conflict in neighbouring regions, the growing number of refugees and migrants arriving in the region have to overcome fearful attitudes among locals. To counter this trend, UNHCR works closely with civil-society organizations and others involved in refugee protection. It is represented at public events, seminars and conferences, and engages with the media to raise awareness of refugee needs. Innovative approaches include high-visibility campaigns using public spaces and transport. Particular attention is paid to improving communication through social media. Where xenophobia and racism have led to violence against asylum-seekers and refugees, UNHCR will address the problem with the help of local partners.

Financial information

Over the last four years, UNHCR's financial requirements in the subregion have increased slightly. In 2014, the financial requirements are set at USD 62.5 million, a slight increase from the revised 2013 budget of USD 60.2 million, mainly due to the reinforcement of the Office's responsibilities in covering the Nordic and Baltic countries. Approximately 94 per cent of the 2014 budget is allocated to refugees and asylum-seekers, with the remaining 6 per cent allocated to the stateless programme.

Budgets for Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe | 2010–2015



Budgets for Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe | USD

Operation	2013 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2013)	2014		TOTAL	2015
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme		
Belgium Regional Office	14,553,295	12,505,096	1,504,165	14,009,261	14,009,261
Hungary Regional Office	11,294,317	11,724,569	1,004,580	12,729,149	12,729,149
Italy Regional Office	21,728,884	22,035,168	191,910	22,227,078	19,969,225
Spain	1,459,619	1,863,715	43,808	1,907,522	1,907,522
Sweden Regional Office	3,374,032	4,405,546	935,927	5,341,473	5,341,473
Regional activities	7,768,243	6,261,619	0	6,261,619	6,261,619
Total	60,178,391	58,795,712	3,680,391	62,476,103	60,218,250