

EASTERN EUROPE

Armenia,
Azerbaijan,
Belarus,
Georgia,

Republic of Moldova,
Russian Federation,
Ukraine.

EASTERN EUROPE REGIONAL OVERVIEW

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Recent Developments

UNHCR has been involved in the countries of the former Soviet Union since the early 1990s. Initially, the Office concentrated on asylum-seekers in the Russian Federation and responded to emergencies in the Caucasus and in Tajikistan, but UNHCR's involvement developed into longer-term programmes intended to take a capacity-building approach to helping the new countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) develop their own asylum systems. The Office has worked with the governments to elaborate asylum and citizenship legislation in conformity with international standards, and provides guidance on its implementation.

UNHCR is very concerned about the humanitarian consequences of the current conflict in the

North Caucasus, and the possibility of further destabilisation of an already fragile region. Large-scale displacement has already occurred and as this appeal goes to press, the number of displaced is still increasing. UNHCR is providing emergency relief within a UN inter-agency framework, but continuing risks to the safety of humanitarian workers limit their ability to undertake significant assistance operations.

Strategic Objectives

UNHCR's approach in Eastern Europe has been shaped by the Programme of Action adopted in May 1996 by the CIS Conference. It provides a strategy for addressing current problems of displacement and preventing new ones. It highlights the need for more respect for human rights, including minority rights and refugee rights, and an 'enabling environment' that would strengthen

civil society structures. UNHCR intends to continue to support NGOs working with or for refugees and displaced people, and to encourage increased cooperation in the region between governments and NGOs.

The chief constraint in the region continues to be the deadlocked nature of long-standing conflicts in the Trans-Caucasus and the Republic of Moldova, although glimmers of hope are discernible on some fronts. Long-term solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) depend on the political resolution of conflict. However, conflict-resolution has a humanitarian dimension, since solutions to displacement problems are an integral part of the peace process. For example, in South Ossetia, Georgia, links between UNHCR and the Joint Control Commission at the political level, and with the OSCE on the ground, have given returnees more confidence in the conflict-resolution process and the sustainability of peace.

Operations

In addition to the country programmes in **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russian Federation and Ukraine**, which are presented in separate chapters, UNHCR has operations in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova.

In **Belarus**, UNHCR will place particular emphasis on helping regional migration services to implement the recently revised Law on Refugees and begin refugee status determination procedures (these are already underway in the capital). In a country which serves as a corridor for illegal migration, there will also be a continued need for public information to ensure that the rights and problems of asylum-seekers and refugees are understood and respected. UNHCR will continue to run a modest assistance programme to help recognised refugees integrate. It will also provide legal and social aid for asylum-seekers pending determination of their status, and help build up the expertise and resources of nascent NGOs active in this area.

The Government of the **Republic of Moldova** has expressed its intention to accede to the 1951 Convention and a draft Refugee Law is under study by Parliament. UNHCR will continue to enhance the capacity of the Government to deal effectively with issues relating to refugees and IDPs and the capacity of NGOs to play a meaningful role in this field. A Parliamentary Working

Group has recommended the creation of a central refugee/migration authority, which UNHCR would support. UNHCR will support vulnerable asylum-seekers approaching the Office: it will intervene to regularise their status and preclude refoulement and statelessness. Some educational and medical facilities will be reconstructed or refurbished to help IDPs stabilise their situation.

EASTERN EUROPE	
BUDGET (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Armenia	3,875,960
Azerbaijan	4,676,373
Belarus	781,917
Georgia	8,946,202
Republic of Moldova	1,015,419
Russian Federation	12,900,255
Ukraine	4,311,964
Regional Project*	112,800
Sub-total	36,620,890
Bureau at Headquarters	1,625,500
Total	38,246,390

* Covers scholarships for refugee students in Eastern European countries.

Follow-up to the CIS Conference

This Conference, held in May 1996, was designed to promote a comprehensive approach to managing the problems of refugees, displaced persons and returnees in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It resulted in the adoption of the Programme of Action, which is a strategy for dealing with and preventing problems of further displacement.

Implementation of the Programme of Action will clearly go beyond the year 2000. Most of UNHCR's assistance activities are already integrated into mainstream country-level programmes in the CIS. UNHCR will ensure that a number of outstanding activities will be integrated during 2000.

A Steering Group, established to follow up the implementation of the Programme of Action, will meet for the last time in 2000. UNHCR will support the inter-governmental process of setting up a framework for continued consultation at the international level, through participation in the working group set up by the Steering Group meeting of June 1999. The respective roles of UNHCR, IOM and OSCE will be considered in the process.

The Conference follow-up is considered to have been successful in supporting the development of indigenous NGOs and their increasingly significant involvement in the implementation of the Programme of Action. UNHCR will seek to enhance these results in the longer term within the country operations (including a visible component for local capacity-building) and through support for thematic working groups formerly falling under the NGO Fund arrangements. These groups will provide advocacy for local and international NGOs. UNHCR will seek to enhance their sustainability post-2000 by facilitating their fund-raising efforts. UNHCR's efforts to set up appropriate legal frameworks for non-profit organisations will be built on by experts working for the Council of Europe, the World Bank and UNDP at the country level. In 2000, the last year of Conference follow-up, UNHCR's support will continue to include the production and translation of relevant publications on and for NGOs, about refugee and displacement issues.

UNHCR's programmes in 2000 in the 12 countries of the CIS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia require a total of **USD 44,413,100**.

