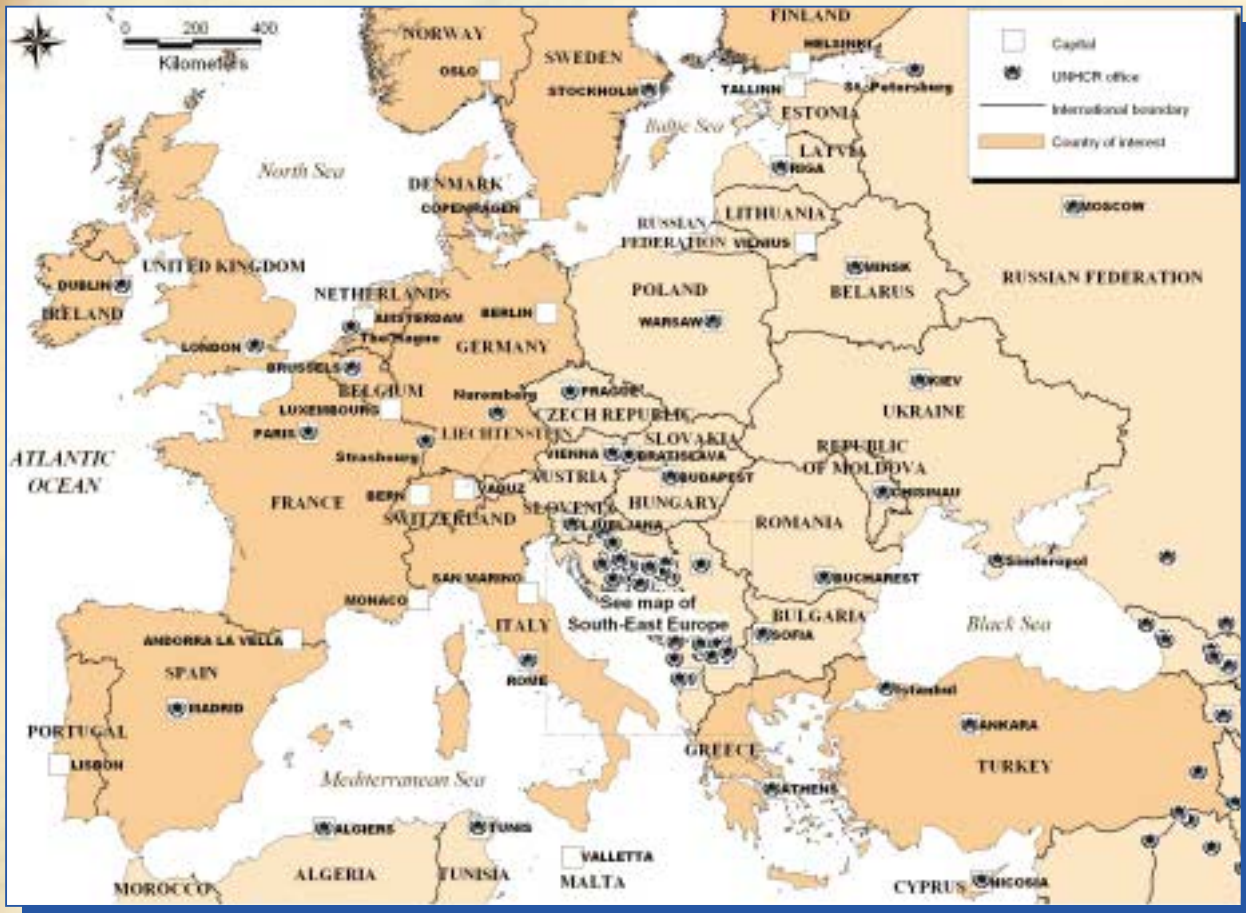


WESTERN EUROPE

- | | | | |
|----------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Belgium, | Greece, | Malta, | Spain, |
| Cyprus, | Iceland, | Monaco, | Sweden, |
| Denmark, | Ireland, | Netherlands, | Switzerland, |
| Finland, | Italy, | Norway, | Turkey, |
| France, | Liechtenstein, | Portugal, | United Kingdom. |
| Germany, | Luxembourg, | San Marino, | |

WESTERN EUROPE REGIONAL OVERVIEW

WESTERN EUROPE REGIONAL OVERVIEW



Recent Developments

The October 1999 Summit of the Council of Ministers in Tampere, Finland, of the European Union (EU) marked a watershed in efforts to harmonise asylum policy within the EU. The Summit focused on policies to implement the Treaty of Amsterdam. Most encouragingly, the summit emphasised that a common policy on asylum and migration must “offer guarantees to those who seek protection in or access to the European Union.” The main outstanding challenge, which UNHCR stands ready to help meet, is to ensure that measures to control migration do not undermine these guarantees. In parallel to harmonisation efforts, the process of drafting or amending national asylum legislation has recently gathered momentum in several Western European countries.

Strategic Objectives

UNHCR’s overall objective in Western Europe is to collaborate actively in the development of policies, the setting of standards and the solving of problems, to ensure that collective efforts adequately respond to the protection needs of refugees, asylum-seekers and others in need of international protection. Here the key is to strengthen working partnerships with governments, European institutions (such as the EU and the Council of Europe), non-governmental organisations and civil society at large.

Closer cooperation with the EU, its Member States and institutions is, and will remain, a high priority for UNHCR in carrying out its statutory activities in Western Europe. As the EU embarks on the full and immediate implementation of the Treaty of Amsterdam, UNHCR expects to be

actively associated with the activities of the Union regarding the development of common asylum policies within the broad framework agreed upon by the Council of Ministers at the Tampere Summit.

Operations

Cooperation with, and Advice to, Governments

In the light of EU harmonisation objectives and the influence of Western Europe on refugee protection throughout the world, closer collaboration between UNHCR and Western European governments is bound to improve markedly the international protection of refugees. UNHCR will seek to influence legislative, regulatory, and legal developments in areas of particular concern, including asylum-seekers' access to territory, refugee eligibility procedures, detention and family reunification. Another protection challenge in Europe is the development of new approaches for particular refugee situations, to ensure that all persons in need of protection receive it. Experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo illustrates the need for such complementary forms of protection, as well as for a gradual improvement of standards in situations of large-scale influx. In this respect UNHCR will support EU efforts to set consistent standards which will serve to strengthen, rather than undermine, the 1951 Convention.

In its role as supervisor of adherence to international refugee instruments, UNHCR considers it vital that the eligibility procedure is in overall compliance with both material and procedural international standards. It also seeks to promote a correct and inclusive interpretation of the 1951 Convention. To these ends, UNHCR continues to participate in the eligibility procedures of several Western European countries in an advisory capacity or even as an active, full member of the country's eligibility body. In a few countries, UNHCR will continue to offer technical, legal and normative advice for the work and development of the newly established administrative and judicial bodies dealing with refugees and asylum-seekers. Moreover, UNHCR will continue to influence jurisprudence by offering legal opinions to lawyers and to the Courts in precedent-setting cases. In countries with considerable expertise on eligibility and where procedural safeguards have proved reliable, UNHCR will seek to restrict its involvement to cases at the appeals stage.

Promotion and Advocacy

Unfortunately, public opinion in Western Europe is increasingly prey to intolerance and xenophobia. Asylum-seekers are frequently being confused with economic migrants. The result for refugees is segregation, deprivation and demoralisation. In order to stem this trend, one aspect of UNHCR's approach is to promote increased public understanding of the specific plight of refugees. Starting in 1998 in partnership with the EU, UNHCR launched a concerted public information and awareness campaign in all 15 EU Member States. The first stage focused on dispelling popular myths about who is a refugee; the second stage, to be finalised in the spring of 2000, will focus on refugee integration. The campaign will address the challenges refugees face in trying to win social acceptance, which in turn depends on achieving, and being seen to achieve, economic self-reliance.

UNHCR will actively engage in developing constituencies of support within civil society by providing the general public with accurate factual information, and by linking up with other initiatives to help refugees. The occasion of UNHCR's 50th Anniversary will provide an opportunity to increase the visibility of UNHCR's work through commemorative stamps, benefit concerts, and special media events. Anniversary activities will complement various planned national public information campaigns, such as exhibitions about the lives of refugees and the distribution to schools of educational materials on refugees. Building on the established success of private sector fundraising in several countries – in Italy, for instance, private contributions in 1999 may well reach USD 14 million – similar initiatives will begin in other European countries.

Partnerships and Networking

UNHCR will participate more closely in European asylum policy developments through enhanced cooperation and networking with EU institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and many other European fora. All UNHCR offices in Western Europe are involved in advocacy and lobbying at all levels. UNHCR will promote refugee law through participation in training events with academic institutions.

UNHCR's partnership with NGOs is also very important as the latter directly contribute towards the fulfilment of UNHCR's mandate. At national level, UNHCR's protection monitoring duty is

likely to be performed with the help of an NGO network that will bring cases or matters of concern to the attention of UNHCR. Depending on the gravity of the case, UNHCR will in turn bring it to the attention of the government and offer possible solutions. UNHCR also financially assists NGOs in a number of countries to work more effectively for refugees. These NGOs are helped to provide financial and legal assistance to needy refugees and asylum-seekers who do not receive legal aid or material support from the national welfare systems.

Solutions

UNHCR will support the local integration of refugees, mainly through its public advocacy activities and UNHCR-funded projects, in those countries that have less developed national support systems. UNHCR will continue to promote and facilitate family reunification and resettlement to Western Europe as vital elements in the search for durable solutions. Appropriate attention will also be paid to the promotion of voluntary repatriation, including the provision of regularly updated information on conditions in the country of origin. In connection with the Kosovo crisis, another challenge for the year 2000 is for UNHCR to ensure that return be effected in accordance with acceptable standards of human dignity and security, but that continued protection be provided wherever needed.

WESTERN EUROPE	
BUDGET (USD)	
Countries	Annual Programme
Belgium	2,258,405
Cyprus	339,168
France	2,254,856
Germany	2,265,496
Greece	1,407,645
Ireland	304,377
Italy	2,106,039
Malta	200,000
Netherlands	228,331
Portugal	133,000
Spain	999,853
Sweden	1,066,414
Switzerland	803,794
Turkey	4,573,978
United Kingdom	1,345,821
Sub-total	20,287,177
Bureau at Headquarters	899,700
Total	21,186,877

