

Europe



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Seeking safety and protection in Europe, an estimated 362,000 people risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2016, with 181,400 people arriving in Italy and 173,450 in Greece. Children accounted for just over a quarter of arrivals, many of them unaccompanied, separated from caregivers, and needing specific attention. The Mediterranean Sea proved ever more perilous to people trying to cross it. While in 2015, some 3,770 refugees or migrants died or went missing trying to cross it, that figure rose to more than 5,000 people in 2016. The Balkans continued to see significant onward movements, although movement from Serbia to Hungary slowed as most people were obliged to pass through transit zones operated by the Hungarian authorities. In 2016, Europe received nearly 1.2 million new asylum applications, with applicants originating mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) – 9 per cent more than the same period in 2015.

A young Syrian refugee boy runs under a line of wet clothes left to dry on a train wagon near the Idomeni transit station, Greece, where more than 10,000 refugees and migrants remain despite the closure of the so-called western Balkans route.

Significant challenges persist in providing protection and securing solutions for displaced people in the region, including increasing restrictions on access to territory; a lack of appropriate reception conditions, particularly for people with specific needs, such as unaccompanied and separated children; and inadequate asylum procedures. Against this background, the European Commission announced a series of proposals in 2016 aimed at amending the current Common European Asylum System (CEAS), including the reform of Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

Working with governments and other partners, UNHCR focused on access to asylum and the development of fair and effective asylum systems, with special attention for unaccompanied and separated children, and integration-related support and family reunification. Furthermore, the Office tirelessly advocated for a coordinated and comprehensive policy and operational response to gaps in national asylum systems, and approaches based on solidarity and responsibility-sharing among European States, which, in parallel, supported emergency response such as the provision of reception conditions.

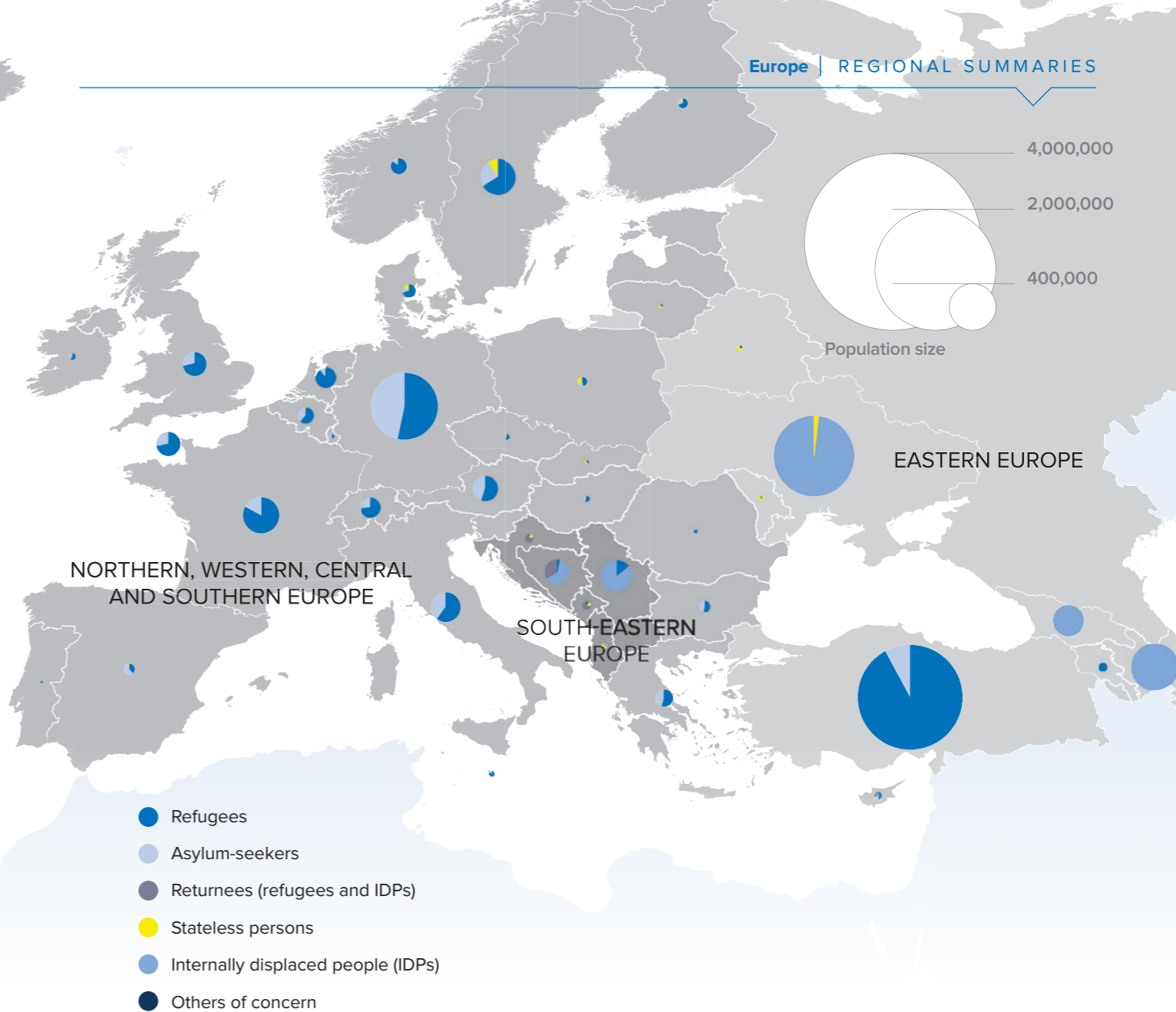
By the end of 2016, Europe hosted approximately 10.2 million of people of concern, including 6.6 million asylum-seekers and refugees, 3 million IDPs (including returnees) and more than 570,000 stateless people.

MAJOR SITUATIONS

Mediterranean situation

The large number of refugees moving through the region, the unpredictability of their movements, and the continuously shifting travel routes they adopted, made the distribution of assistance and extension of protection to people with specific needs particularly challenging in 2016. Although the European Union-Turkey statement of March 2016 resulted in a substantial change in the situation, with significantly fewer people trying to reach Greece from Turkey. Simultaneously, the de facto closure of the western Balkans route led to a rapid rise in the number of people in Greece. Consequently, UNHCR needed to rapidly shift and expand its operational response in countries where it had previously focused on advocacy. It launched a Refugee Emergency Response in Europe supplementary appeal, as well as an inter-agency regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe (RMRP) in 2016.

In Greece, while there had been improvements in some sites, unmet needs remained significant. Living conditions in many of the sites, both on the islands and the mainland, have deteriorated due both to congestion and the harsh climactic conditions at the end of the year, particularly concerning for people with specific needs, such as unaccompanied or separated children. UNHCR and its partners consequently focused on improving existing



reception capacity and facilities by, for example, sending additional relief items to help people at the sites bear winter conditions, connecting electricity, ensuring there was heating, and introducing pre-fabricated housing units. The Office helped more than 20,000 people access alternative urban accommodation, such as in rented apartments, hotels or with host families, including 700 places for unaccompanied children; and nearly 16,000 people benefited from the accommodation scheme through cash-based interventions.

Turkey continued to host the largest number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate worldwide, with 2.8 million Syrian refugees at the end of 2016, of which less than 10 per cent live in camps. It also hosts almost 250,000 asylum-seekers and refugees from elsewhere. Syrian refugees continued to benefit from temporary protection, as well as access to education, health and the labour market. Under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), UNHCR continued to support Turkey's implementation of the temporary protection

regulation and Syrians' access to rights and entitlements. Positive steps were made in term of access for Syrian refugees to education and livelihood opportunities, particularly the Turkish authorities' issuing of 13,000 work permits to Syrian refugees in 2016.

In the western Balkans, the resumption of irregular movements saw groups of people gathering at various border points, including at the Serbia-Hungary border, where physical barriers and legal restrictions had been established. UNHCR refocused its response on protection monitoring interventions, advocacy and the building of national protection systems, after efforts were shifted to Greece.

Ukraine conflict

More than 1.8 million people remained internally displaced in Ukraine, with the United Nations estimating between 800,000 and 1 million people displaced within the government-controlled areas. In addition to IDPs, some 270,000 Ukrainians sought asylum abroad, mainly in Belarus, Poland and the Russian Federation, with 10,375 new asylum applications during 2016 by Ukrainians in Europe, primarily in Germany, Italy and Spain.

To respond to IDP protection needs in eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons was established in April 2016. UNHCR and the Ministry signed a letter of understanding in October 2016, which provided a framework

to strengthen collaboration and coordination of activities, enhance freedom of movement for IDPs, harmonize legislative frameworks, and facilitate dialogue with IDPs and civil society.

UNHCR continued working within the inter-agency framework for IDPs, leading the protection and shelter clusters. The Office promoted freedom of movement across the contact line between government-controlled areas and non-government-controlled areas and access to rights and entitlements. Significant material assistance was provided, including core relief items and/or winterization items, such as blankets and stoves, as well as cash grants, and construction materials. UNHCR worked with communities to implement 34 quick impact projects, including establishing community centres with free legal aid offices, and creating suitable conditions for a children's trauma hospital, contributing to better quality health services in non-government-controlled areas.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Emergency response to refugee arrivals and mixed movements by sea

Although UNHCR worked closely with governments and NGO partners in countries affected by large-scale arrivals, by supporting national and local authorities in mitigating protection risks, most emergency response work was delivered in Greece during 2016. The Office focused on the

provision of immediate, life-saving assistance, in support of the response by the Government and local communities. More than 20,000 people in 16 sites received emergency winterized shelter and at least 300,000 core relief items were delivered, with particular attention given to those with specific needs.

UNHCR and partners provided legal counselling services to new arrivals on the Greek islands and at land border crossings, as well as at reception centres in south-eastern Europe and other locations frequented by refugees and migrants on the move. At some critical transit points, legal assistance was available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Measures to prevent and respond to protection risks, including SGBV and family separation, were established. Child protection mechanisms were enhanced, including ensuring decisions were in the best interests of children, as were mechanisms for identification and referral of those with specific needs. UNHCR also strengthened communication with communities to better target protection interventions and assistance, and to identify and address information needs.

Safeguarding asylum space and providing acceptable reception conditions

UNHCR continued advocating the reflection of international protection standards in the European Union's border management policy, particularly given the transitioning of

the European Union border agency, Frontex, to the new European Border and Coast Guard Agency. Through robust cooperation and its chairmanship of the Frontex consultative forum on fundamental rights, UNHCR played a key monitoring role by responding to practices that potentially compromised access to international protection in the European Union.

The Office continued to monitor access to territory, asylum and other relevant procedures across Europe, through border monitoring and capacity building for authorities. It also advocated appropriate reception conditions and alternatives to detention for new arrivals. In southern Europe, UNHCR worked closely with Frontex and EASO to ensure access to asylum and the provision of protection-centred assistance, including safe and dignified reception facilities, relocation efforts and family reunification, where relevant. In Greece, UNHCR and EASO supported the Greek Asylum Service in carrying out a pre-registration exercise for nearly 27,600 individuals. Despite the efforts of Greek authorities, UNHCR, NGOs, volunteer groups and other partners to improve conditions at accommodation sites, refugees and other people of concern continued to move from Greece, including to reunite with family members already in the European Union. In Italy, UNHCR worked with local authorities to support the European Union's relocation scheme from Italy, and assisted with the establishment of adequate reception conditions and procedures sensitive to the specific needs of people of concern, particularly of

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unaccompanied and separated children. The Office also maintained a regular presence in the Spanish autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

People moving irregularly in Central Europe and the western Balkans were vulnerable to smugglers and criminal organizations, with pushbacks and collective expulsions resulting in limited access to adequate protection. UNHCR strengthened its cooperation with relevant actors to meet the specific needs of the large number of unaccompanied and separated children. With the Serbian authorities, the Office carried out a joint reception standards assessment to define how accommodation facilities needed to be upgraded and to ensure reception conditions were in line with international protection standards. In addition, it stockpiled sufficient emergency shelter and core relief items to assist the authorities. Collectively, these efforts saw space at government-organized accommodation increase from 2,000 to more than 6,000 places, of which close to 4,000 were suitable for long-term occupancy.

Building and maintaining fair and effective asylum and protection systems

Building on lessons learnt in 2015, UNHCR and the European Union continued promoting a CEAS that respects human rights and refugee law standards, and

stepped up efforts towards a more coherent, solidarity-based and protection-focused system, sensitive to people with specific needs.

Throughout 2016, the European Commission released a number of proposals to reform the CEAS and prevent irregular onward movements. UNHCR expressed concern about some of them, including the introduction of mandatory admissibility procedures in the absence of independent, reliable and updated information on the situation in a country deemed “safe” for return by asylum-seekers. The Office published a paper entitled “Better protecting refugees in the EU and globally” in December 2016, which aimed to rebuild trust through better management, partnership and solidarity. It outlined how accelerated procedures and distribution mechanisms prioritizing family reunion, and substantive links with Member States, could achieve a more manageable and coherent common asylum system.

Large-scale arrivals saw some European Union countries increasingly resort to detention. UNHCR supported further development of EASO and Frontex, and reinforced its cooperation with the judiciary across Europe, at national levels and before the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union. The organization intervened as a third party in selected cases affecting people of concern.

In Eastern Europe, the “quality initiative” provided a regional forum for governments to exchange asylum-related challenges, facilitating partnerships, strengthening access to territory, asylum and refugee status determination (RSD), and enhancing the quality of judicial review. The target audiences included first-instance decision makers, border guards and members of the judiciary in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

In Turkey, UNHCR and the Government resumed the negotiations process to transition from UNHCR RSD procedures for non-Syrian asylum-seekers to a Government-led system. The organization will continue registration and RSD activities until the hand-over is completed.

UNHCR also supported local authorities in several European countries to establish appropriate protection systems for unaccompanied and separated children, including in terms of provision of information and referral, identification and best interests procedures.

Securing durable solutions

UNHCR encourages States to act on their commitments in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (see *Glossary*), to build on existing cooperation and

partnership mechanisms for facilitating migration, in line with the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

The Office advocated the expansion of safe and legal pathways to protection across Europe, published recommendations on the proposed European Union resettlement framework, and remained actively engaged with those negotiating draft legislation. In 2016, almost 13,900 people were resettled to Europe, including around 2,760 from Turkey under the European Union-Turkey statement. Since 2013, 25 European countries pledged some 112,300 places for Syrian refugees for resettlement and other forms of admission. UNHCR continued to advocate targeted increases in funding mechanisms relevant to refugee integration, and the reinforcement of measures outlined in the European Commission’s Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals. Internal relocation from within the European Union continued at a slow pace, with only 8,160 of a targeted 160,000 relocated.

UNHCR supported the governments of south-eastern Europe to fully assume responsibility for finding durable solutions for remaining IDPs. Some particularly vulnerable groups, such as Roma, remain in need. UNHCR continued to offer legal counselling for all those still in need of solutions or at risk of statelessness.

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Preventing and resolving statelessness

Building on the 2015 European Union Council conclusions on statelessness, UNHCR supported the European Migration Network’s platform on statelessness in the European Union as it evaluated Member States’ approaches to statelessness. With the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, UNHCR jointly drafted a “Handbook on statelessness in the OSCE area: international standards and good practices.” This practical tool outlined ways the 57 participating OSCE States could address statelessness.

There were no new accessions to the statelessness conventions in 2016, but steps towards better prevention of statelessness at birth were taken in Norway, where an instruction now permits children born stateless in the country to apply for and acquire Norwegian citizenship. Luxembourg and the Netherlands also introduced bills to improve safeguards against statelessness for children born in the country. In south-eastern Europe, UNHCR and partners helped those in need of civil registration and documentation. In Serbia, a survey found the number of people without identity documents among Ashkalis, Egyptians and Romas had dropped from 6.8 per cent to 3.9 per cent within the past four years (2012-2016).

Consultations with Latvia continued on matters pertaining to the situation of the “non-citizen” population. In Belarus, stateless people were increasingly documented and able to enjoy their socio-economic rights. As a result, the overall number of stateless people considerably decreased due to naturalization.

Constraints

While UNHCR continued to call on European States to demonstrate more responsibility sharing, as well as for solidarity and trust, the erosion of protection space remained challenging. The right-wing populist narrative and xenophobia remained part of public discourse in many European countries, increasing pressure to impose more restrictive legislation, limiting access to territory and national asylum systems, and giving rise to a potential risk of direct or indirect refoulement. Many countries along the western Balkans route passed legislation that placed increased limitations on the ability of various refugee groups to access asylum systems.

Inadequate reception conditions and facilities exposed asylum-seekers and refugees to extreme protection risks, homelessness, and limited integration opportunities, and contributed to an environment in which criminal networks could thrive.

Despite many refugees already in Europe being legally entitled to family reunification,

in practice there were many obstacles that delayed or prevented refugees reuniting with immediate family members. With limited legal pathways available to people seeking international protection to enter Europe, many felt dangerous journeys were their only option.

UNHCR remained concerned that several States felt other countries or regions were better suited to processing asylum claims. This seemed, at times, like an attempt to collectively shift responsibility to States already overwhelmed by the number of refugees on their territories, or in conflict.

More details on individual operations are available in the relevant subregional and country operations pages on the Global focus website (<http://reporting.unhcr.org>).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The 2016 budget for the Europe region initially totalled \$516.9 million. At the end of the year, the revised 2016 budget increased to \$877.9 million, due to additional financial requirements including a supplementary appeal for the refugee emergency response in Europe and the response for Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Earmarked contributions to Europe came to \$424.8 million, including 7 per cent programme support costs, which left 52 per cent of the region’s needs unmet. UNHCR used an indicative amount of \$46 million in unearmarked funding to cover gaps, equivalent to 15 per cent of all unearmarked funds used in the field.

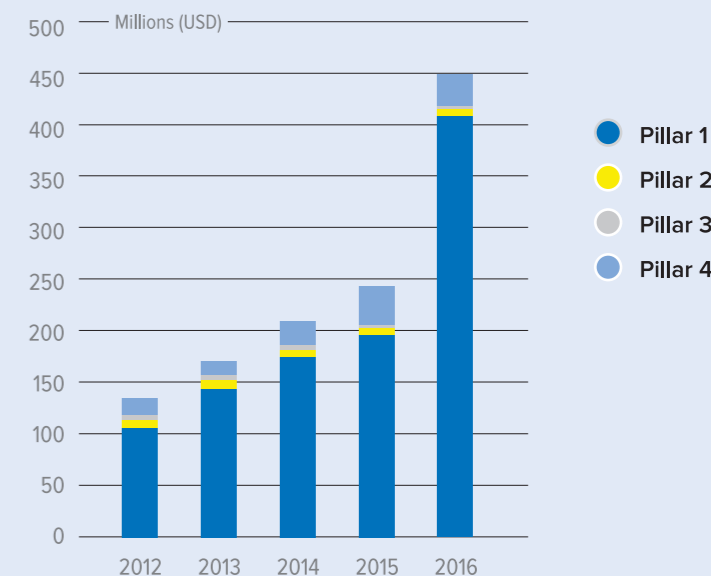
Expenditure in Europe increased in 2016, amounting to \$448.5 million, or 11 per cent of programmed activities, as compared to 7.4 per cent in 2015. The operations with the highest expenditure were Greece (\$183.9 million) and Turkey (\$126.9 million), responding respectively to needs associated

with the situations in the Mediterranean and Syria.

The region’s funding shortfall limited UNHCR’s ability to deliver assistance and protection to people of concern, particularly for those displaced due to conflict in Syria. The lack of funding available made itself particularly felt in the following areas:

- Providing protection and assistance for those displaced due to the conflict in Ukraine.
- Reducing the number of small-scale projects implemented and limited livelihood support in Eastern Europe.
- Assisting refugees for voluntary return to Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999))*.

EXPENDITURE IN EUROPE | 2012-2016



* Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE IN EUROPE | USD

OPERATION		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	TOTAL
EASTERN EUROPE						
Belarus	Budget	2,348,913	25,000	0	0	2,373,913
	Expenditure	1,295,591	13,788	0	0	1,309,379
Georgia Regional Office ¹	Budget	14,287,694	1,045,290	0	6,750,358	22,083,342
	Expenditure	7,362,127	523,162	0	3,302,810	11,188,100
Russian Federation	Budget	5,180,891	430,486	0	0	5,611,377
	Expenditure	3,927,207	400,113	0	0	4,327,320
Turkey	Budget	350,879,226	44,000	0	0	350,923,226
	Expenditure	126,863,311	2,410	0	0	126,865,721
Ukraine	Budget	7,196,869	665,751	0	34,391,294	42,253,914
	Expenditure	5,421,740	71,145	0	19,108,320	24,601,206
SUBTOTAL	Budget	379,893,593	2,210,527	0	41,141,652	423,245,773
	Expenditure	144,869,977	1,010,618	0	22,411,130	168,291,725
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE						
Bosnia and Herzegovina ²	Budget	40,972,104	3,551,882	3,807,006	19,776,321	68,107,313
	Expenditure	27,853,020	2,356,990	1,799,393	8,197,904	40,207,308
SUBTOTAL	Budget	40,972,104	3,551,882	3,807,006	19,776,321	68,107,313
	Expenditure	27,853,020	2,356,990	1,799,393	8,197,904	40,207,308
NORTHERN, WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE						
Belgium Regional Office ³	Budget	17,560,951	1,579,858	0	0	19,140,809
	Expenditure	12,358,550	1,414,566	0	0	13,773,115
Greece	Budget	287,372,830	27,856	0	0	287,400,686
	Expenditure	183,849,881	22,767	0	0	183,872,648
Hungary Regional Office ⁴	Budget	19,178,648	344,420	987,344	0	20,510,412
	Expenditure	14,122,594	252,832	960,912	0	15,336,338
Italy Regional Office ⁵	Budget	18,339,082	173,944	0	0	18,513,026
	Expenditure	14,198,788	97,173	0	0	14,295,961
Sweden Regional Office ⁶	Budget	4,004,447	927,180	0	0	4,931,627
	Expenditure	2,886,099	617,953	0	0	3,504,052
Regional activities	Budget	35,688,138	337,922	0	0	36,026,060
	Expenditure	8,993,719	232,836	0	0	9,226,555
SUBTOTAL	Budget	382,144,095	3,391,180	987,344	0	386,522,619
	Expenditure	236,409,630	2,638,127	960,912	0	240,008,669
TOTAL	Budget	803,009,793	9,153,589	4,794,350	60,917,973	877,875,705
	Expenditure	409,132,627	6,005,736	2,760,306	30,609,034	448,507,702

¹ Includes activities in Armenia and Azerbaijan

² Includes activities in Albania, Macedonia, Serbia (and Kosovo; Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)) and Montenegro

³ Includes activities in Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the liaison office Switzerland and the United Kingdom

⁴ Includes activities in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia

⁵ Includes activities in Cyprus, Malta and Spain

⁶ Includes activities in Latvia and Lithuania

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO EUROPE | USD

DONOR	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	ALL PILLARS	TOTAL
Armenia				98,000	98,000
Austria	2,512,429			368,005	2,880,434
Azerbaijan	10,007				10,007
Belgium	38,501				38,501
Canada	10,172,836			1,123,596	11,296,432
Council of Europe Development Bank			256,161		256,161
Croatia				24,957	24,957
Czechia				38,100	38,100
Denmark	24,000		50,000		74,000
Estonia			330,311		330,311
European Union	172,861,909		6,254,371		179,116,279
Finland			210,943		210,943
France	6,389,632				6,389,632
Germany	20,938,440		2,254,791	31,698	23,224,930
Hungary				241,544	241,544
International Organization for Migration				75,932	75,932
Ireland	207,195				207,195
Italy	7,133,881			179,607	7,313,488
Japan	13,746,506		1,900,000		15,646,506
Lithuania	21,978				21,978
Luxembourg				10,101	10,101
Malta	50,167				50,167
Montenegro				82,745	82,745
Norway	3,451,345				3,451,345
Philippines				5,000	5,000
Poland				64,918	64,918
Private Donors in Australia	132,082				132,082
Private Donors in Canada	12,011			249	12,259
Private Donors in China	24,411				24,411
Private Donors in France	1,629,982				1,629,982
Private Donors in Germany	450,958		182,887	679,633	1,313,478
Private Donors in Greece	364,058				364,058
Private Donors in Italy	68,105				68,105
Private Donors in Japan	1,206,065		193,681		1,399,746
Private Donors in Kazakhstan	5,000				5,000
Private Donors in the Philippines	2,509				2,509
Private Donors in the Republic of Korea	410,000				410,000
Private Donors in Singapore	10,000				10,000
Private Donors in Spain	5,103,381			402	5,103,783
Private Donors in Sweden	362,666				362,666
Private Donors in Switzerland	511,246			95	511,341
Private Donors in the United Arab Emirates	321,383				321,383
Private Donors in the United Kingdom	511,392				511,392
Private Donors in the United States of America	853,943			225,500	1,079,443
Republic of Korea	1,500,000			250,000	1,750,000
Romania				110,320	110,320
Russian Federation		200,000	100,000	300,000	600,000
Slovakia	659,341				659,341
Slovenia	55,188				55,188
Spain	404,181			370,000	774,181
Sweden				1,591,772	1,591,772
Switzerland	377,551				377,551
United Nations Development Programme	34,022				34,022
United Nations Department of Political Affairs	8,242,429				8,242,429
United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security			33,075		33,075
United Kingdom	10,411,637			303,588	10,715,225
United States of America	96,100,000			39,400,000	135,500,000
TOTAL	367,322,367	200,000	11,766,220	45,575,762	424,864,349

Note: Contributions include 7 per cent support costs