

# WESTERN EUROPE

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

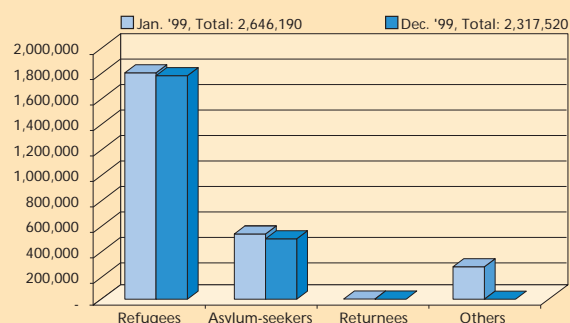


## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The large-scale and swift refugee movement provoked by events in Kosovo beginning in late March 1999, when mass expulsions began, to mid-June 1999, was met with an extraordinary response by Western European and other states. Nearly all states in Western Europe collaborated in receiving Kosovo Albanians from The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, through the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme (HEP). In addition, tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanian refugees arrived in Western European countries spontaneously. During the month of June 1999 alone, the number of these spontaneous arrivals was nearly 20,000 - a figure which almost equalled the total number of asylum-seekers of all other nationalities arriving during the same month. At the time of writing, the vast majority of the refugees had returned to Kosovo. Although not without its problems, the HEP ultimately proved to be an important and innovative arrangement for international burden-sharing.

In 1999, Western European countries received 423,000 asylum applications in all, an increase of about 19 per cent over 1998 levels. Of these, some 41 per cent originated from Europe, 39 per cent from Asia and 17 per cent from Africa.

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



## CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Reacting to concerns over irregular migration, abuse of asylum procedures, the rising cost of refugee support, difficulties in dealing with rejected asylum-seekers and declining public support, an increasing number of industrialised states attempted to redefine the legal framework for offering refugee protection. They proceeded increasingly from an immigration-control perspective rather than an approach based on international refugee law and refugee rights. At times, the particularity of asylum as a distinct concept was submerged in the general debate on migration. These trends are most visible in Western Europe.

One of the major challenges for UNHCR's work in Western Europe continued to be, as in previous years, the momentum towards European harmonisation of legislation and policy in the field of asylum and migration. UNHCR views the European harmonisation process as a key component of a comprehensive regional approach to refugee problems. The Office's main concern is to ensure that harmonisation takes place at the highest common denominator of refugee protection standards. To achieve this, sustained efforts have to be made to move the European asylum debate out of a framework predicated on control, restrictiveness and deterrence.

The need to strike a proper balance between guarantees of access to European Union (EU) territory for persons in need of international protection, and legitimate measures to stem irregular migration and trafficking, have thus remained at the centre of UNHCR's dialogue with the EU, its institutions and Member States. With the establishment of short- and medium-term EU plans of action to implement the asylum-related provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty, UNHCR began to work even more closely with the member states of the EU and the European Commission.

Since the beginning of 1999, UNHCR has been actively involved in the work of the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration, which was established in December 1998 by the EU to develop comprehensive plans of action relating to regions from which significant numbers of asylum-seekers originate. UNHCR believes that such an approach can help address root causes of displacement and, where necessary, strengthen protection of refugees in regions of origin. However, this approach should not be used as a substitute for providing asylum in Europe. While UNHCR is pleased to note that the

High Level Working Group Action Plans adopted in October 1999 include a strong capacity-building dimension geared to protection in the regions covered, it is concerned that the Plans overlook the concept of (European) state responsibility to provide protection to people in need who seek asylum on their territory.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

The harmonisation of European asylum systems received new institutional and political impetus with the organisation of the Special Summit of EU Heads of State on Justice and Home Affairs (including asylum) in Tampere, Finland, in October 1999. UNHCR monitored the process leading up to the Summit and provided various inputs. The Office has been encouraged by the positive commitment evinced in the Conclusions of the Summit, which set out the main orientation of future EU policy on asylum and migration.

The Tampere Summit's unequivocal recognition that any European asylum and migration strategy should maintain a steady focus on "absolute respect for the right to seek asylum" is a very welcome development. UNHCR also warmly welcomes the commitment that a common European asylum system will be based on the "full and inclusive" application of the 1951 Geneva Convention. This means that corrective measures will have to be taken by Member States of the European Union which currently apply a restrictive interpretation of the Convention (for instance, by excluding persecution by non-State agents from the scope of the definition of a refugee). The Conclusions of the Tampere Summit could therefore be the foundations of a comprehensive, shared, outward-looking asylum and migration strategy for a future, enlarged EU. UNHCR remains concerned meanwhile, as to the pattern of restrictive practices at national level, designed primarily to control migration. These practices, which include barriers to access to territory and to asylum procedures, drastically curtail the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers, and are contrary to the spirit of the Conclusions adopted at the Tampere Summit.

In 1999, an initiative was launched by UNHCR and an international NGO to ensure respect for the rights and best interests of separated children and adolescents. The project combines advocacy, training and public awareness activities and seeks also to develop the capacity to respond rapidly in emergencies, and thus avoid the problem of separation.

The second stage of a public awareness and information campaign was launched to counter xenophobia and intolerance. The campaign is jointly organised by the EU and UNHCR in all EU Member States. The second stage focuses on issues relating to refugees' integration in Europe.

## FUNDING

In 1999, UNHCR had sufficient resources to implement its planned activities in Western Europe. In several countries, UNHCR offices mobilised the interest and support of governments and the general public, through public information campaigns and private sector fund raising. Substantial contributions were received from local public institutions, corporations, foundations and individuals.



### Voluntary Contributions - Earmarked (USD)

Donor	Earmarking*	General Programmes		Special Programmes/OTF	
		Income	Contribution	Income	Contribution
<b>BELGIUM</b>					
	Belgium	97,550	97,550	0	0
<b>SPAIN</b>					
	Spain	0	0	50,639	50,639
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>					
	Switzerland	0	0	100,320	100,320
<b>TOTAL**</b>		<b>97,550</b>	<b>97,550</b>	<b>150,959</b>	<b>150,959</b>

\* For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

\*\* Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unearmarked voluntary contributions, lightly earmarked contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

### Budget and Expenditure (USD)

Country	Working Budget*		Expenditure*	
	General Programmes	Special Programmes	General Programmes	Special Programmes
Belgium	2,196,980	0	1,849,892	0
Cyprus	354,537	0	350,534	0
France	1,828,662	693,518	1,606,307	644,762
Germany	2,419,651	0	2,364,898	0
Greece	1,696,289	50,709	1,691,781	38,000
Ireland	228,608	9,523	218,741	9,375
Italy	1,545,658	892,503	1,521,610	884,279
Malta	217,426	0	217,060	0
The Netherlands	223,057	0	201,265	0
The Nordic Countries	1,215,639	0	1,206,033	0
Portugal	207,007	0	205,687	0
Spain	918,708	230,167	879,183	215,639
Switzerland	866,607	84,084	802,306	77,718
Turkey	4,897,706	251,907	4,892,701	219,397
United Kingdom	1,623,450	224,102	1,564,021	224,777
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,439,985</b>	<b>2,436,513</b>	<b>19,572,018</b>	<b>2,313,947</b>

\* Figures do not include costs at Headquarters.