

**Belgium, Luxembourg, The
Netherlands and the European
Institutions**

2002 COUNTRY

OPERATIONS PLAN

Part I: Executive Committee Summary

(a) *Context and Beneficiary Population(s)*

The principal objectives of UNHCR's Regional Office in Brussels (RO) are to ensure respect for refugee protection principles both nationally, at the level of the three Benelux countries (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) and, more generally, in the European Union's (EU) process of harmonising its asylum laws and policies. The RO also seeks to gain political and financial support for UNHCR concerns, programmes and operations world-wide and manages all aspects of UNHCR's donor relations and resource mobilisation with the European Institutions.

National level protection in the Benelux countries

RO Brussels seeks to promote a positive protection environment for asylum-seekers and refugees in the three Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) through the provision of advice on asylum and refugee protection issues, as well as through advocacy, training, monitoring and selective legal interventions in individual cases, notably those of a precedent-setting nature. It also seeks to strengthen relations with the national NGO sector. A different operational environment characterises each of the Benelux countries and this increases the complexity of the work of the Regional Office.

The harmonisation of European Union asylum policies

Through its involvement in the harmonisation process, UNHCR aims to ensure that EU asylum policy adheres to standards of international refugee law and that EU asylum practice is in accordance with UNHCR principles. RO Brussels spearheads UNHCR's work with the European Institutions (Commission, Council, Parliament and Presidency) in relation to the harmonisation of asylum policies within the framework of the Amsterdam Treaty. Having entered into force on 1 May 1999, the Treaty sets a five year time frame (1999 – 2003) for the development of a number of EU-wide binding instruments on key aspects of substantive and procedural asylum law. RO also prepares and disseminates positions on the EU harmonisation process to UNHCR offices in EU capitals and co-ordinates advocacy strategies amongst these offices.

EU enlargement

RO also collaborates closely with the European Institutions on asylum-related aspects of the EU enlargement process. It seeks to promote the establishment of fair and effective asylum systems in the applicant States and to ensure that UNHCR concerns are factored into EU programmes and budgets for the region. It also assists UNHCR's offices in Central Europe to identify funding and other support for the strengthening of asylum systems in Central European countries.

Separated Children in Europe

RO Brussels co-ordinates UNHCR's work on developing standards and good practices in relation to separated children seeking asylum in Europe. In 1998, UNHCR and the International Save the Children Alliance (Alliance) established a joint project to promote the rights of the increasing number of separated children coming to or travelling across Europe. UNHCR participation in the project is administered by RO Brussels. The Programme includes the Western European countries, and the Central European and Baltic states, as well as Croatia and Slovenia.

Donor relations with the European Institutions

Since late 1999, RO Brussels is responsible for the management of all donor relations and resource mobilisation with the European Institutions. Its responsibilities in this regard include the strengthening of overall partnership, the identification of funding opportunities, the negotiation of contributions, the management of funding submissions and contracts, and reporting on the funds received. RO represents UNHCR in negotiations between the United Nations and the Commission on framework agreements governing UN-EC Co-operation. It also seeks to influence the humanitarian aid agenda of the European Institutions (notably the Commission and Parliament) in relation to refugee concerns.

Other External Relations

In addition, the Regional Office plays a variety of external relations roles in connection with a wide range of Brussels-based processes and institutions of crucial importance to UNHCR. It maintains close contacts with the European Council in relation to the development of a common European Foreign and Security Policy, notably its crisis management component, as well as with NATO. Moreover, the RO provides inputs into EU efforts to develop comprehensive approaches to refugee crises through strengthened partnership with countries of origin and transit of asylum-seekers.

(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

Theme 1: The quality of asylum in a uniting Europe	
Main Goal(s): 1. Persons in need of international protection will have access to the territories of European States; 2. States will develop, and gradually harmonise, asylum systems in conformity with international standards; 3. Public opinion will be receptive to the protection needs of refugees and supportive of their integration efforts.	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">To ensure that harmonised European instruments on asylum and refugees meet relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Instruments adopted and other measures taken in the context of the EU harmonisation process reflect international

<p>international standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that national legislation and practice in Benelux countries are in conformity with international protection standards. • To promote standards and good practice in relation to separated children seeking asylum in Europe. • To ensure that public opinion is receptive to the protection needs of refugees. 	<p>protection standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asylum-seekers have the effective possibility to exercise in Benelux countries the right to seek asylum, and their claims are considered in an impartial, fair and efficient manner. • Refugees in Benelux countries are treated in accordance with international protection standards. • The needs of separated children are appropriately reflected, at national and EU levels, in both legislative dispositions and administrative practices. • A better understanding of the protection needs of refugees and asylum-seekers in Europe is created amongst the media and public at large.
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<p>Theme 2: Europe's Support to UNHCR and Refugees World Wide</p>	
<p>Main Goal(s):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. European Governments, regional organisations and private individuals/corporations will increase their financial support to UNHCR operations; 2. The European people will give more, and better informed, support to UNHCR and to the refugee problem; 3. States and regional organisations will actively uphold UNHCR's protection and assistance concerns and actively seek solutions to refugee problems internationally 	
<p>Principal Objectives</p>	<p>Related Outputs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that EC/EU funding of UNHCR's operations is at a level and of a form commensurate with the activities the Office has been mandated to carry out. • To ensure that refugee concerns and problems of displacement are given appropriate priority by the European and military institutions. • To mobilise public opinion in favour of humanitarian action for the benefit of refugees world-wide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC funding to UNHCR will be provided in a predictable, timely, geographically balanced and appropriately flexible manner, covering in principle the whole range of UNHCR's mandated activities including protection, assistance and support to durable solutions. • Through a process of advocacy and active engagement, UNHCR concerns will be reflected in the priorities, policies and external action of the Brussels-based institutions. • Through work with the media and public awareness initiatives, a better understanding will be created of the needs of refugees and the work of UNHCR world-wide.