



Central Europe and the Baltic States

Operational highlights

- The Governments of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia agreed to be the primary providers of protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees. This allowed UNHCR to largely phase out its provision of material assistance and legal and social services to refugees and asylum-seekers. As a result, UNHCR was able to concentrate its efforts and resources on strengthening the asylum systems in these countries.
- More systematic border monitoring activities were carried out by UNHCR in the subregion, which culminated in the signing of a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on border monitoring in Hungary. The MOU formalized the cooperation, roles and responsibilities of UNHCR and all those involved in the border monitoring process.
- By mid-2006, UNHCR completed the resettlement of the remaining Uzbek refugees who were temporarily living in Romania.

Working environment

The new European Union (EU) Member States continued to amend their national asylum legislation in order to transpose asylum-related European Union directives and the Dublin Regulations into national legislation. UNHCR outlined strategies to ensure that

Bulgaria

Cyprus

Czech Republic

Estonia

Hungary

Latvia

Lithuania

Poland

Romania

Slovakia

Slovenia

Turkey



Governments in the subregion continued to cooperate closely with UNHCR in the process of amending their national asylum legislation which enabled UNHCR to exercise its supervisory role in accordance with Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The systematic provision of social and legal services to asylum-seekers, the monitoring of reception conditions by UNHCR and its partners and the effective use of country of origin information have all had a positive impact on asylum-seekers and supported the goal of safeguarding the quality of the asylum systems. UNHCR also continued to work with governments and civil society in the region to improve the prospects for the local integration of refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR welcomed Romania's accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. To promote further accessions, the Office translated the *Handbook for Parliamentarians on Nationality and Statelessness* into Hungarian, Polish, Slovak and Slovenian.

the transposition of directives on asylum and asylum-related issues builds on existing law and good practice, thereby closing gaps and improving protection standards. UNHCR was closely associated with this process and monitored all related developments.

The number of asylum-seekers in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia continued to decrease. In 2006, more than 11,200 people applied for asylum in these six countries, which is approximately 2,400 fewer than in 2005.

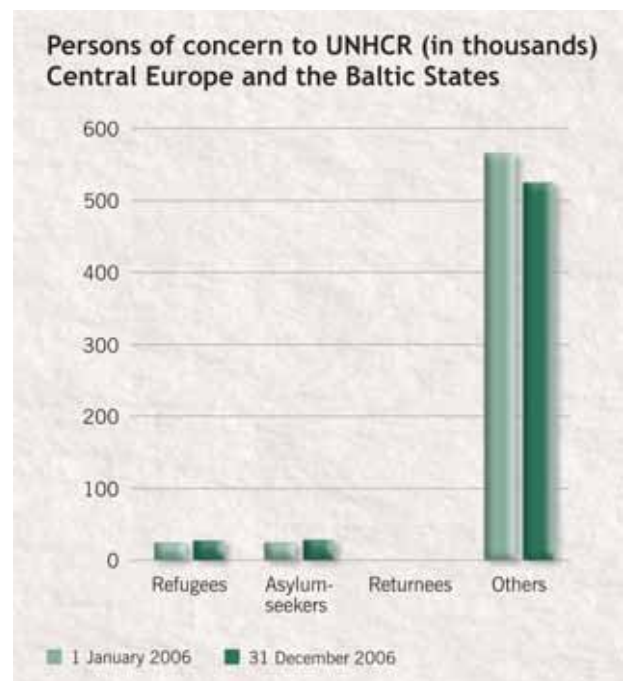
UNHCR continued to observe key areas in which gaps were apparent in Central Europe and the Baltic States. This included the right of access to national territory and asylum procedures; problems in processing asylum claims (especially the lack of access to legal advice, confinement in detention or transit/border zones); and the quality of decision-making.

Achievements and impact

In line with UNHCR's strategic objectives for Europe, the Office facilitated access for asylum-seekers to the territories of European States and to refugee status determination procedures. The Office also worked towards achieving reception conditions which meet international standards; ensuring fair and efficient asylum procedures and the promotion of durable solutions, especially; local integration.

Constraints

Strengthening asylum in Europe continues to be a main priority for UNHCR. This is especially the case with mixed population movements in which asylum-seekers need to be distinguished from other migrants, both regular and irregular. The environment, however, presents increasing challenges as the security concerns of governments are leading to tighter border controls and more restrictive asylum policies. UNHCR is concerned that some governments in the region are giving less priority to the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees.





Asylum-seeker and refugee children study in a primary school in Debrecen, Hungary.

The primary durable solution for refugees in the region continued to be local integration. However, refugees continue to face obstacles to integration due to difficulties in learning the national language, finding jobs, acquiring housing and accessing social services. Increasing levels of xenophobia further exacerbated the situation.

The removal of thousands of citizens of the former Yugoslav republics from the Slovenian population records in 1997 has resulted in a so-called “erased” group of people, who are at risk of becoming stateless. UNHCR is concerned about the significant number of people with unclear nationality status.

Operations

Information on UNHCR’s operations in **Turkey** is provided separately in the next chapter. This chapter covers the rest of Central Europe and the Baltic States.

UNHCR advocated with the governments in the subregion for greater State responsibility in the provision of services to refugees and asylum-seekers. This strategic approach allowed UNHCR to increasingly focus on monitoring and advocacy activities.

In **Hungary, Poland, Slovakia** and **Slovenia**, following the results of the 2005 age, gender and diversity participatory assessments, action was taken to help improve the situation of asylum-seekers and refugees. In Poland, some 70 per cent of asylum-seekers’ children were enrolled in school by late 2006, compared to 50 per cent and ten per cent in 2005 and 2004 respectively. In Slovenia, improved security in the reception centre has had a positive impact on the situation of women and girls living there. The findings and recommendations of the participatory assessments in these countries, as well as in Bulgaria and Romania,

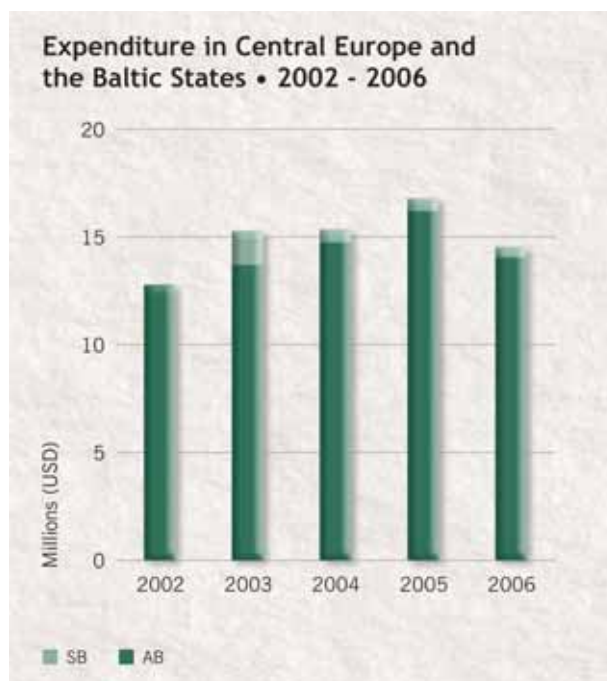
addressed several common issues, such as the need to improve the social and protection situation of asylum-seekers and refugees, including reception conditions and integration support.

In **Cyprus**, UNHCR continued its involvement in refugee status determination interviews and other protection activities including visiting detention centres and advocating for better reception conditions. UNHCR’s action has significantly contributed to an improved protection infrastructure for recognized refugees and asylum-seekers in Cyprus.

In the subregion UNHCR continued its efforts to mobilize public support for protection and integration policies. The Office was engaged in awareness-raising

activities and media events designed to give the public a better understanding of the plight of refugees. They also contributed to creating an environment more conducive to accepting asylum-seekers and refugees. NGOs received media training to help boost their public relations capacity. UNHCR assisted NGOs in diversifying their funding base through new EU funding mechanisms.

UNHCR continued with the reconfiguration of its presence in Europe through its regional representations. The UNHCR office in Slovenia was closed in May 2006 and activities were directly managed by the Regional Representation in Budapest, which also covers Hungary, Slovakia and Poland. The UNHCR office in Slovakia became a national office, and since July 2006, UNHCR’s office in Cyprus has been put under the management of the Regional Representation in Rome.



Financial Information

An increasing number of Central European States continued to make contributions to UNHCR's programmes in 2006. UNHCR offices continued to lobby governments, regional organizations, private individuals and corporations to help fund UNHCR operations worldwide.

UNHCR's expenditure in Central Europe and the Baltic States was smaller than in previous years. This was

mostly due to the capping of all country programme budgets in 2006. Although UNHCR's expenditure in the subregion increased between 2003 and 2005, this was mostly due to contributions made by donors for extra budgetary protection activities, as well as the introduction of a supplementary budget for Iraq in which resources were made available to increase UNHCR's presence in south-eastern Turkey.

Budget and expenditure (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	AB	SB ¹	Total	AB	SB	Total
Bulgaria	1,008,414	0	1,008,414	886,074	0	886,074
Cyprus	811,952	300,452	1,112,404	637,744	70,014	707,758
Czech Republic	1,056,977	0	1,056,977	907,613	0	907,613
Hungary	2,316,485	0	2,316,485	1,901,792	0	1,901,792
Poland	1,018,466	0	1,018,466	807,365	0	807,365
Romania	1,532,015	0	1,532,015	1,322,702	0	1,322,702
Slovakia	875,711	0	875,711	755,777	0	755,777
Slovenia	344,225	0	344,225	333,710	0	333,710
Turkey	7,762,450	836,064	8,598,514	6,184,417	409,087	6,593,503
Regional activities ²	363,989	0	363,989	313,520	0	313,520
Total	17,090,684	1,136,516	18,227,200	14,050,713	479,101	14,529,814

¹ Does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

² Includes activities relating to the promotion of refugee law.

Restricted voluntary contributions (USD)		
Earmarking	Donor	AB
Central Europe and the Baltic States	Sweden	251,256
	United States	2,300,000
	Sub-total	2,551,256
Cyprus	Private donors in Cyprus	28,192
	Sub-total	28,192
Turkey	Australia	33,842
	Netherlands	261,641
	United Kingdom	133,832
	Sub-total	429,315
Regional activities	Dutch Postcode Lottery (NPL)	200,000
	Russian Federation	50,000
	Sub-total	250,000
Total		3,258,764