#### ****3.3 Information Sheet UNHCR:**** *Rebuilding Lives in Peace and Dignity* <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/>

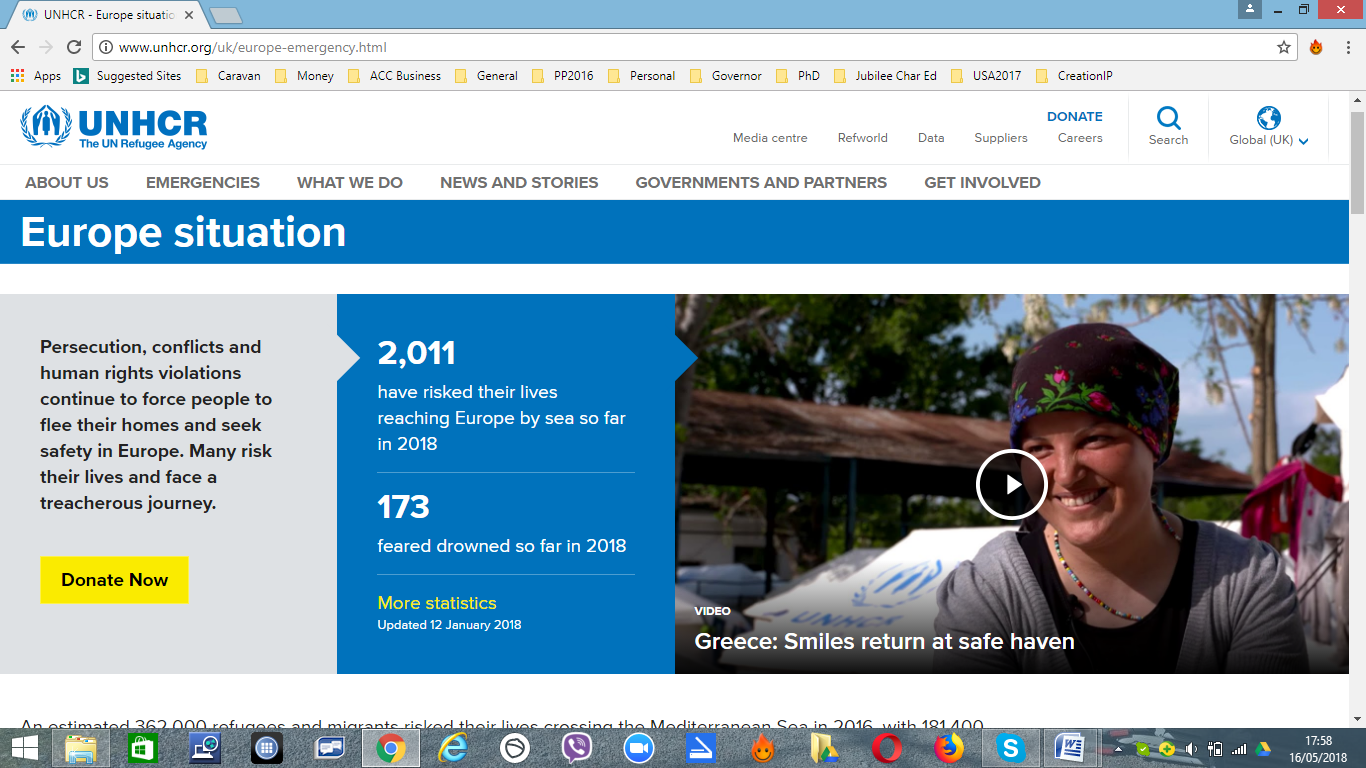
**The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1950, during the aftermath of the Second World War, to help millions of Europeans who had fled, or lost their homes in the war. They had nothing, many were ill and starving, and they were in fear of their lives.**

UNHCR's first task in 1951 was to help an estimated 1 million mainly European civilians, including these refugees in a camp in Germany, still uprooted in the aftermath of World War Two. 
After World War 2, millions of people were displaced across Europe and the rest of the world. An international agreement was needed to set out the treatment of refugees in Europe.

147 countries signed the **Refugee Convention**; and later on, the **1967 Protocol**, which extended the Convention’s work to the rest of the world. [link to the [1951 Refugee Convention](http://www.unhcr.org/uk/1951-refugee-convention.html)]

Today UNHCR is still hard at work, protecting and assisting refugees around the world. *‘At UNHCR, we believe that everyone has a right to seek asylum from persecution, and we do our best to protect those who need it.’*

* In 1954, UNHCR won the **Nobel Peace Prize** for its groundbreaking work in Europe.
* In 1956, during the **Hungarian Revolution**, 200,000 fled to neighbouring Austria. Recognising the Hungarians as *'prima facie'\** refugees, UNHCR led efforts to resettle them. This uprising and its aftermath shaped the way humanitarian organisations would deal with refugee crises in the future.
* During the 1960s, the decolonisation of **Africa** produced the first of that continent's numerous refugee crises.
* In 1981, we received a second Nobel Peace Prize for what had become worldwide assistance to refugees.
* The start of the 21st century has seen UNHCR help with major refugee crises in **Africa, the Middle East and Asia.**
* UNHCR has also been asked to help many people who have been ‘internally displaced’ by conflict and expanded our role in helping ‘stateless’ people.



UNHCR works in a total of 130 countries around the world.

*We have helped well over* ***50 million refugees*** *to successfully restart their lives.*

This means that we co-ordinate emergency aid, to help people who are ill, or starving, and without enough clothes or protection to keep warm. We provide pop-up schools so children can be taught, even in refugee camps. We organise specialist help for people who have seen terrible events and are traumatised. We work with nations to find a country for refugees to settle in, so that they can have a normal life and find work to help them regain dignity and meaning in life. If possible, and it is safe, we help them to return home, to their place of normal residence.

\*Note: *Prima Facie* refugees. **An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed. Every year, around one million people seek asylum.**

However, during mass movements of refugees, often as a result of conflict or violence, it is not always possible to conduct individual interviews with every asylum seeker who crosses a border. These groups are often called ‘prima facie’ refugees: it is assumed that a person in the group that is escaping from conflict is a genuine refugee, and they are given refugee status straight away.