



Belarus

11 April-10 May 2022

The Government of Belarus allows all refugees from Ukraine to access Belarusian territory and asylum procedures if they wish to seek protection. Foreigners fleeing the conflict in Ukraine and traveling to their countries of permanent residence are allowed to enter, transit and exit Belarus visa-free. All COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted at border crossing points with Ukraine and no PCR test is needed.

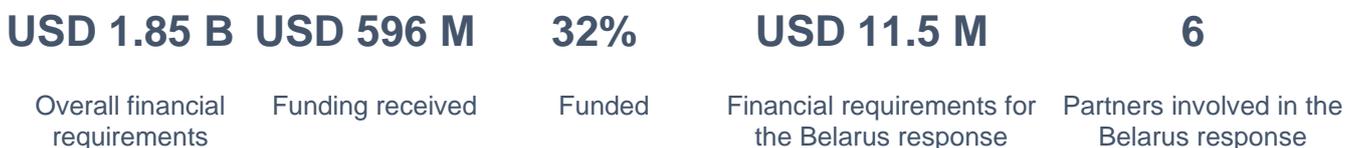
Starting from the second half of April, only few refugees crossed the border directly from Ukraine. Most refugees transit through the EU, mostly through Poland, and self-accommodate with relatives or friends. Others are supported by the local authorities with identifying accommodation and employment opportunities. The Government leads the response to

the Ukraine refugee situation in Belarus, with the Belarusian Red Cross Society (BRCS) being the recognized channel of international aid delivery and distribution. An inter-agency Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) led by UNHCR has been established at country level to complement the Government's efforts.

KEY FIGURES (as of 10 May)*



REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN (RRP) FOR THE UKRAINE SITUATION**



*See the [Operational Data Portal for the Ukraine Refugee Situation](#) for more details on refugee population figures and information resources. The statistics are based on data provided by the State Border Committee (SBC) of Belarus. The figures reflect border-crossings and may include pendular and transit movements. The age and gender break-down are estimates based on data collected by the BRCS (sample size: 1,370 individuals).

**See the [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) for a breakdown of sectoral response priorities and requirements and the [Refugee Funding Tracker](#) for RRP funding information.

This report was produced by UNHCR in collaboration with inter-agency partners.

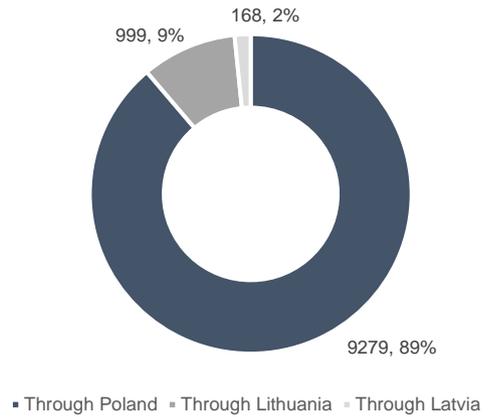
Operational context

As of December 2021, Belarus was host to 2,732 refugees and 128 asylum-seekers. Amongst those, 2,378 refugees and 14 asylum-seekers were Ukrainian nationals, most of whom arrived in Belarus due to conflict that had erupted in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in 2014. Asylum-seekers and refugees also come from other countries of origin, such as Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

A total of 26,856 refugees from Ukraine have crossed the border to Belarus from 24 February to 10 May. 244 persons are third country nationals (including from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, USA). Valid ID documents or international passports are not required for persons seeking protection in Belarus. 10,446 persons have transited through EU countries before entering Belarus.

Since 24 February and as of 10 May, a total of 6,021 Ukrainians have registered with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) for a legal status in Belarus. 3,828 Ukrainians are in the records of the MOI's Department on Citizenship and Migration (DCM) as persons with permits for temporary stay up to three months. 631 persons have applied for asylum in Belarus. 1,143 have applied for 1-year temporary residence permits. 419 have applied for permanent residence permits.

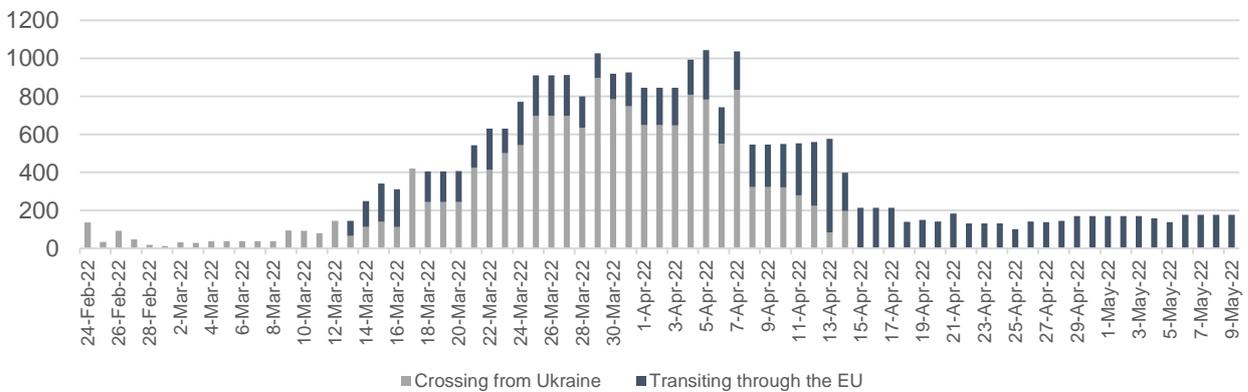
Refugees from Ukraine transiting through the EU*



The temporary accommodation facilities (TAFs), where refugees from Ukraine were sheltered during the first two months of the crisis, have been vacated because the sanatoria will be needed for commercial purposes for the tourist season. Refugees who were temporarily accommodated at the TAFs are assisted by the BRCS and local authorities in identifying employment with accommodation opportunities or other private accommodation.

Most refugees arriving in Belarus come from the regions around Kyiv and Chernihiv. Groups of people at heightened risk include women; female-headed households; children, especially unaccompanied and separated children (UASC); elderly; people with disabilities; and people in need of medical support. The number of people fleeing from Ukraine to Belarus is relatively small compared to other neighbouring countries. However, the Government and RRP partners need to be prepared for an increase in arrival numbers as the crisis in Ukraine unfolds in an unpredictable manner and Ukrainians continue to arrive increasingly through EU countries.

Arrivals of refugees from Ukraine in Belarus*



*The statistics are based on data provided by the State Border Committee (SBC) of Belarus. The figures reflect border-crossings and may include pendular and transit movements.



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

Partners work together to strengthen the capacity of the Belarusian Red Cross Society (BRCS) in **collecting age and gender disaggregated data**. The regional protection profiling form developed by UNHCR and adapted to the Belarusian context has been introduced for this purpose. These efforts will provide a better understanding and regional comparability of the profiles, intentions and needs of refugees coming from Ukraine to Belarus. This will be important for forward programme planning.

UNHCR regularly monitors the **access to territory, temporary stay arrangements, and asylum procedures, as well as reception conditions**. UNHCR provides legal counselling to refugees from Ukraine and referrals to asylum procedures through the joint project “Refugee Counselling Service (RCS)” together with its national legal Partner, Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers (BMMW). This includes third country nationals who are not covered by the temporary stay arrangements provided for Ukrainians and who may be in need for international protection. Since March 2022, 485 persons (267 cases) have been counselled through the RCS at their offices and through phone calls. Out of those, 223 persons have applied for asylum in Belarus and 262 benefitted from temporary stay arrangements for Ukrainians in Belarus. The RCS also conducted five visits to TAFs during the reporting period where it provided counselling to about 120 persons through individual and group sessions. The information provided to refugees at the TAFs included lodging asylum applications in Belarus, other options for regularization of stay / residence in Belarus, modalities for employment, as well as regulations and practical aspects related to medical treatment, education, receipt of allowances from the Government, including pensions. In addition, UNHCR has counselled 48 persons from Ukraine through its helpline and counselling sessions at its office in Minsk.

IOM assists nationals of third countries who are not in need for international protections to voluntarily return to their countries of origin when it is possible to do so in a safe and orderly manner.

UNICEF with other UN agencies is partnering with MOI’s DCM to strengthen inter-agency mechanisms for case management, referral and support to **unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)**.

A key response priority is **psycho-social support** particularly for children and their caregivers, women, older persons, and persons with disabilities, who might have suffered from or witnessed violence. A psycho-social mobile team was started by UNICEF with capacity building for frontline workers supporting children. Through UNICEF partners, over 180 children benefitted from PSS activities during the reporting period. 1,000 copies of psychological first aid information material on dealing with stress and assisting children in situations of anxiety, including support available in Belarus, is being distributed by UNICEF among refugees from Ukraine in TAFs in Gomel and Brest regions.

Partners are also working towards supporting the Government and local partners in providing psycho-social support to **women survivors and those at-risk of gender-based violence (GBV)**. Efforts are made to strengthen the multi-sectoral response system, including referral procedures and safe space for counselling, as well as safe shelter.

Partners are collaborating on **conducting joint training sessions**. UNFPA has conducted two trainings for 30 service providers and volunteers on GBV prevention, gender-responsive services and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in humanitarian settings and is planning to conduct one training per month in different regions until the end of the year. UNFPA, UNICEF and UNHCR are planning to further

strengthen capacity on PSEA in a collaborative effort. UNICEF has joined a two-days PSS training organized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) for 20 BRCS specialists and volunteers with a session on psycho-social support for children in conflict situations. An online training on immunization and health for BRCS specialists was organized by UNICEF. 18 BRCS specialists from across Belarus were trained on main child immunization issues and the importance of immunization promotion for Ukrainian refugees; access to healthcare services for Ukrainian refugees; and availability of hotline support for children and parents in crisis situations, or who have been victims or witnesses of violence and/or abuse. Through UNICEF's partnership with the Republican Center for Psychological Aid, 60 pedagogues and psychologists working with children and refugees received training on working with children in crisis situations and stress resilience for frontline workers (i.e. psychologists). In the framework of the BRCS's initiative supported by UNDP, 127 volunteers and specialists were trained to provide support to refugees, including psycho-social support.

Given the expected high percentage of female headed households who may lack a regular income, **one-time emergency cash assistance** will be the most effective method of providing dignified assistance and gives the recipient a choice of prioritizing their needs. UNHCR has so far allocated USD 50,000 for this purpose that targets up to 800 vulnerable persons. Identification of needs is being done on vulnerability basis, taking into account gender, age and disability specifics.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Partners need to adapt their programming to the **rapidly changing situation on the ground**. The TAFs have been almost completely vacated during the reporting period because the sanatoria will be needed for commercial purposes for the tourist season. Refugees who were temporarily accommodated at the TAFs are assisted by the BRCS and local authorities in identifying employment with accommodation opportunities or other private accommodation. Partners will therefore work with refugees who are dispersed through all regions of the country and will need to adapt their services accordingly.

Recently, UNICEF has signed a new case management partnership agreement with a Civil Society Organization (CSO) to assess and identify the needs of families with children and refer them to the relevant services. UNFPA and the BRCS Gomel branch established counseling and a referral mechanism based on the emerging needs of women, elderly, and persons with disabilities. The piloted mechanism will be scaled up in other oblasts of the country.

Partners expect that more assistance will be needed particularly in the areas of **child protection** and **GBV prevention and responses** with focus on children, women, elderly, and persons with disabilities and are offering to assist with targeted and specialized interventions. Children and women fleeing Ukraine face enormous and multiple protection risks that require strengthening system measures to respond to immediate needs for safety, stability, and protection from risks of violence, exploitation and potential trafficking.

Women and child survivors of GBV and different forms of trafficking will need immediate support and referral. Gender, age and disability responsive GBV referral pathways and standard operating procedures need to be strengthened. Services and support also need to be expanded, including safe spaces for counselling and service provision particularly for women, girls and boys; elderly women; and women, girls, and boys with disabilities. Close coordination with existing government structures across sectors and CSOs in Belarus will be essential.

UASC and other children at heightened risks, need to be identified immediately and referred to protection services, appropriate alternative care arrangements, and other assistance.



EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

Refugee children from Ukraine have access to the national preschool and school education system and most do not face a language barrier to access education.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

School administration, teachers and other education specialists require additional support to identify and respond effectively to children's heightened levels of distress. UNICEF is working with key government partners to strengthen and scale-up safe space programmes in schools in the regions where there may be large portions of refugees.



HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

To address the current crisis situation, the Ministry of Health (MoH) issued a letter, which stipulates that citizens of Ukraine who fled to Belarus through "humanitarian corridors" are eligible to receive medical treatment on an equal level with citizens of Belarus. The services are available in the local out- and in-patient healthcare departments in all regions where refugees from Ukraine are accommodated. These measures will be further defined in a normative act, which exempts citizens of Ukraine and stateless persons who have resided in Ukraine "for not less than one year as a rule" and are coming to Belarus "to obtain permits for temporary and permanent residence" from payment for medical services provided by state healthcare organizations.

UNFPA established a procedure of referring for sexual and reproductive health services to healthcare facilities in Minsk and Gomel region and covering the costs of **women health care** above the national standards (e.g., some diagnostic procedures).

IOM is hiring psychologists who will receive referrals from psycho-social services and will provide follow-up **mental health consultations** to those in need. Due to the changing situation, the hiring process of one psychologist is currently ongoing.

IOM has procured a pack of vouchers, which can be used by beneficiaries for the procurement of **medicines** in local pharmacies (for total budget around 200 USD).

WHO suggested to the MoH and BRCS to reallocate a part of the 4 medical kits and 5,000 COVID-19 rapid tests that were previously delivered to Belarus for the mixed movements situation at the EU-Belarus border. Each medical kit can be used for providing medical care and treatment for a population of 10,000 for three months. A part of the medical kits has already been distributed to healthcare facilities in Gomel region.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Some groups of people fleeing from Ukraine to Belarus, particularly adult third country nationals who are in the asylum procedure, will have to pay for most medical services that go beyond emergency medical

treatment. According to some reports, the letter by the MoH leaves room for interpretation in different regions and individual cases of persons in need for medical treatment who were required to cover the medical expenses have been reported. Given the circumstances and possible loss of income, it is expected that such individual cases will need **financial support or medical services** provided free of charge, particularly the most vulnerable.

As per the needs assessed, many refugees arriving from Ukraine need **mental health services** that go beyond psycho-social support. There are acute manifestations of mental health issues and psychological distress in children and adolescents, women, older persons who fled from Ukraine.



FOOD SECURITY

Achievements and Impact

More than 40,000 USD have been allocated by UNHCR to the BRCS to provide supplementary food in TAFs in addition to the usual three meals a day. This amount covered the needs for supplementary food for up to two months. In addition, UNHCR allocated almost 20,000 USD for the provision of food parcels at border crossing points.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

The BRCS tent transit points at the border crossing points are currently not operational because of decreasing arrival numbers. BRCS is stands ready to re-open the transit points wherever they are needed.



SHELTER AND BASIC NEEDS

Achievements and Impact

During the reporting period, refugees from Ukraine either self-accommodated with their relatives or friends or received temporary accommodation in designated facilities – TAFs – while opportunities for longer-term accommodation were identified by the regional authorities and with support by the BRCS. Gomel and Brest Oblasts are the primary regions to accommodate refugees from Ukraine. The average stay by refugees housed in the TAFs was about 10 days before moving to cities and farms with employment opportunities or moving on to other neighboring countries. Some persons stayed for a longer period of time in the TAFs (some up to 2 months).

The beneficiary population at the border and the TAFs was on average 400 persons per day and started decreasing in mid-April. It is important to note that these are not the same people, as people in TAFs rotate and leave for a more permanent locations.

UNICEF has reallocated 70,000 USD to the Ukraine refugee situation to procure clothes, shoes, toys, games, stationery, and hygienic items for children and an additional 30,000 USD have been made available for adults. UNHCR has re-channeled 8,000 thermal blankets and 2,000 mattresses to the Ukraine refugee situation. 15,000 hygiene kits have so far been provided by IOM, 3,600 kits for approximately 6,600 individuals have been procured locally by UNICEF, more than 340 individuals over the reporting period have received the kits.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Due to decreasing numbers of arrivals and the sanatoria being booked for commercial purposes, the sanatoria will be fully vacated by the end of May. Other options must be sought in collaboration with the local authorities and BRCS and the programmes by partners need to be adapted accordingly. The dormitory in Brest region will continue to temporarily host refugees from Ukraine.

Some refugees who are relocating to private accommodations in the host communities have expressed their need for basic needs items including blankets, pillows, linen, towels, kitchen items, cleaning material, furniture, large household appliances, stationery for schoolchildren, clothes, shoes and medicines.

Partners face issues with the local market and local procurement due to sanctions that have been applied to Belarus as well as limited local production capacity.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

Achievements and Impact

The Government published employment opportunities at the TAFs while these were operational. Most employment opportunities are available in rural locations and collective farms. The authorities are relocating those people who are willing to seize these accommodation and employment possibilities. Work permit procedures are being expedited and IOM is assisting with covering the fees for employment permits. In the reporting period, IOM has covered the fees for 16 employment permits.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Partners will need to ensure that individuals have access to accurate and timely information to make informed choices. Channels of preferred and trusted communication to engage with partners should be established. Communities should have opportunities to be engaged in programme design, implementation and monitoring – so that communities' voices drive decision-making.



LOGISTICS, SUPPLY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Achievements and Impact

Partners are supporting with transportation of new arrivals from border crossing points to TAFs and with transporting items that have been re-channeled to the Ukraine situation. UNHCR has allocated 10,000 USD for this purpose. UNHCR has rented a warehouse in Gomel region to store stocks of NFIs to be able to provide humanitarian assistance quickly.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Additional warehouse space needed to be made available. The capacity of the BRCS was just 70m2 of space, which was not sufficient to accommodate all incoming supplies.

Working in partnership

The Government of Belarus leads the response to the Ukraine refugee situation engaging the BRCS as a main channel of international aid delivery and distribution. UNHCR is leading the inter-agency **Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF)** that has been established at country level to complement the efforts of the Government of Belarus. RCF partners include the MOI's Department of Citizenship and Migration (DCM), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, IFRC, BRCS, and the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) in an observing role. The RCF can expand to include other actors as required and agreed. The regional Governor and Governor's office in Gomel, as well as regional service providers are among other important counterparts that the RCF works with in close liaison.

UNHCR leads and coordinates the implementation of the **regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for the Ukraine situation** in line with the **Refugee Coordination Model (RCM)** and in close collaboration and consultation with relevant Government counterparts, and with the support of inter-agency partners and other stakeholders. The RRP was officially launched on 27 April. Belarus is reflected under the "Other Countries" chapter. The six RRP partners in Belarus have developed a summary 4-Pager to outline the multi-partner, multi-sector response strategy and financial requirements in Belarus.

RRP PARTNERS IN BELARUS: IOM | UNDP | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | WHO

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LINKS

[Regional data portal – Ukraine Situation RRP – Refugee Funding Tracker](#)