



Belarus

1 July - 30 September 2023

All border crossing points between Ukraine and Belarus have remained closed on the Ukraine side since April 2022. Refugees displaced from Ukraine continue to arrive in Belarus through Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Russian Federation. Refugees from Ukraine in Belarus have strong family links and social connections.

Approximately 43% of refugees are being hosted by relatives or friends, while approximately 29% have found accommodation in self-rented apartments and 8% live in accommodation provided by an employer. Another 5% are being hosted by local families***. Most Ukrainian refugees have settled in urban and peri-urban areas, with

Minsk City being the primary destination, followed by Brest, Gomel, Grodno, Minsk Region, Vitebsk, and Mogilev. Most households are composed of women, children, and older people, highlighting the prevalence of family separation among displaced persons.

KEY FIGURES*

35,571

Individual refugees from Ukraine recorded in the country (as of 30 September**)

28%



16%



28%



28%



* See the [Operational Data Portal for the Ukraine Refugee Situation](#) and the [Belarus portal page](#) for more details on refugee population figures and information resources.

** Figures are based on estimated presence utilizing Department of Citizenship and Migration (DCM) monthly data.

*** Figures are based on [Inter-agency Protection Monitoring and Profiling 2023 survey coordinated by UNHCR](#).

Operational context

As of 30 September 2023, the Ministry of Interior's Department of Citizenship and Migration (DCM) has reported the number of **35,571** citizens of Ukraine, who entered Belarus after 24 February 2022, currently residing in the country. Among them, **3,135** people have formally applied for asylum, of which **2,571** have been granted complementary protection. The remaining persons are awaiting decisions on their asylum applications.

Sectoral Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

The protection response aims to minimize protection risks faced by refugees upon their arrival in Belarus and address their most immediate needs by providing timely and person-centred access to information, legal assistance, psychosocial support, and material assistance, including but not limited to cash-based interventions.

From July to September 2023 UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM and UNFPA assisted 6290 people with protection-based activities including legal counselling and assistance, community-based psychosocial support activities, and support through helplines.

UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM and UNFPA have supported the establishment of the Mogilev region Red Cross Crisis Centre with furniture, equipment (TV, air conditioner), water, sanitation and hygiene and other supplies. This opening of the centre was planned for November 2023.

On 27 July 2023, UNHCR delivered a quarterly training to Refugee Counselling Service (RCS) for capacity building in aspects of legal protection and professional development. UNHCR's efforts in strengthening the capacity of its partner organizations and providing legal expertise through such workshops are critical in responding to the needs of refugees.



Child Protection

Achievements and Impact

Significant achievements have been made in child protection during the third quarter of 2023, particularly in reaching out to children and providing critical support. A major focus included strengthening outreach, as well as identifying critical needs in psychological support and providing them with individual and group recreational activities and specialized support.

UNICEF and partners maintained the Blue Dot and information points in Brest and Vitebsk regions to provide critical information and referral to the relevant services and partners in Belarus to 496 individuals, including 183 children (86 girls) people, particularly focused on families with children.

UNICEF provided Mental Health and Psychological Support (MHPSS) services to 3,253 individuals, including 1,124 children. During the reporting period, 723 children from families of refugees from Ukraine visited child-friendly spaces and were involved in social integration and group psychosocial support activities. 281 refugee children received individual case management. More children are becoming aware of their rights and are being connected to the necessary services they require. This progress marks a significant step forward in enhancing the well-being of refugee children in Belarus.



Child-friendly corner in DCM Gomel region © UNICEF/Irina Kozlova

UNICEF has signed a rolling work plan with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) to strengthen systems and increase capacity in protection and the justice system. Within collaboration with MOI, UNICEF launched a child and parent-friendly room in the DCM Gomel region unit. Child-friendly corners were established for a safe and supportive environment for refugee children and their parents who have applied to the regional DCM for help in obtaining official status in the country.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Refugee families with children require longer-term MHPSS support, continuous needs assessment processes and referral mechanisms related to child protection.



Gender-Based Violence

Achievements and Impact

During the reporting period, UNFPA provided accommodation, specialist support, and counselling for 13 refugee women from Ukraine in Vitebsk Belarus Red Cross Crisis Centres, as well as has expanded its services in Orange Safe Spaces and crisis centres, to include art therapy classes for older people from Ukraine, and where knitting groups develop clothing items for those who need them. During the reporting period, 74 older people from Ukraine joined the activity.

On 11 August 2023, UNFPA delivered training on "Psychosocial Support and Prevention of Emotional Burnout" in Gomel to consultants and volunteers, who assisted Ukrainian refugees at the Orange Safe Spaces. The training aimed to emphasize the importance of mental health and well-being for refugees and front-line workers and included building emotional resilience to prevent burnout, to ensure the continuity and quality of assistance. By conducting this training in the Orange Safe Space, UNFPA highlighted its commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for refugees.



Education

Achievements and Impact



The students actively participate in a moot court as part of the activities during the VI Summer School. © UNHCR/Yuri Fedorenko

From 28 till 31 August 2023 UNHCR hosted its sixth Summer School on Refugee Law and Statelessness. This initiative raises awareness among law students on the topic of refugee protection and statelessness. This summer school, which engaged 20 law students, aspiring legal professionals, and individuals interested in refugee issues and human rights, served as a platform for students to interact with experts from UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF who delivered sessions on thematic topics related to their respective mandates. This included subjects such as the national asylum system in Belarus, protection of children's rights, and the Global Compact on Migration, and provided a deep dive into crucial aspects of refugee protection.

The culmination of the event featured a moot court where students had the opportunity to apply their knowledge and showcase their understanding of refugee law and statelessness in a practical setting. This allowed students to gain practical experience but also emphasized their role in advancing refugee rights and protection.

During the reporting period, 205 children, including 107 girls, were supported by UNICEF with school readiness cash support and 39 children were provided with tablets to continue their online education.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

UNICEF has conducted phone-based post-distribution monitoring of humanitarian cash transfers where questions about school enrollment of school-aged children were included as well. It revealed that more than 81 % of school-aged children attended school during the last academic year. Among 19% of children who didn't attend school, the main reason included engagement in online education, and issues with documentation while enrolling. Evidence from this exercise will be used to raise barriers with the Ministry of Education to ensure children can access learning in a school environment.



Health and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

From July to September 2023, 769 persons received support to access health services, while 6525 consultations were provided for mental health and psychosocial support.

First aid training was conducted on 31 July by the BRC delivered first aid training to national staff. The training equipped them with life-saving skills but also promoted a culture of safety, collaboration, and confidence.



Basic Needs

Achievements and Impact

Major achievements have been made in addressing the basic needs of vulnerable individuals in Belarus, thanks to the joint efforts of UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, and UNICEF. In total, 12,052 individuals have received assistance, including housing kits, hygiene kits, food packages, multi-purpose cash assistance, and accommodation. The support has impacted the well-being and living conditions of refugees allowing families to secure safe and adequate housing, maintain hygiene and sanitation, access nutritious meals, and receive financial support for their basic needs.



Livelihoods and Socio-Economic Inclusion

Achievements and Impact

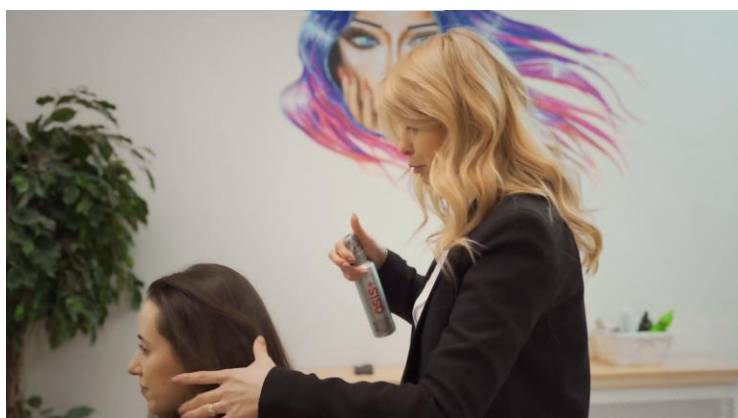
During the reporting period, significant achievements were made in promoting livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion for refugees in Belarus. UNDP, UNHCR and IOM played key roles in assisting people seeking to improve their economic opportunities.

UNDP provided expert support to build the capacities of refugees on the basics of entrepreneurship in Belarus. In August, training was delivered in Minsk, Vitebsk and Mogilev. 64 refugees received practical tools for generating a business idea, testing it, analyzing the market, and drawing up a business model, as well as information on the

current regulatory framework on entrepreneurship in Belarus, taking into account the status of participants (residence permit, temporary residence, refugee status). Participants of the training also worked on specific business cases that they submitted for review or that had already been supported financially by partners.

UNHCR and IOM assisted 1,873 people, focusing on enhancing their employment opportunities through support in referring them to employment centers, CV writing, job selection, as well as financial inclusion.

On 28 September 2023 UNHCR and partner RCS organized an art workshop in Gomel for refugee children of different age groups. The event was aligned with the UNHCR global art contest “Hope away from home.” The workshop fostered a lively and creative atmosphere with skilled art professionals guiding the children to craft their distinct artworks and submit them for the contest. The workshop also children’s social inclusion, enabling them to forge new friendships and connections.



Elena, refugee from Ukraine, receives clients in a beauty salon ©IOM

IOM continues to play an important role in assisting refugees in rebuilding their lives and fostering their inclusion in society. For example, Elena, a double-displaced refugee from Donetsk to Sumy in Ukraine in 2016, and from Ukraine to Minsk, Belarus in 2022. In Donetsk, Elena worked as a chief accountant. After moving to another city, she wanted to change her sphere of work to be more independent and flexible with time, having a minor at home. With IOM's support, Elena completed a Social Media Marketing course and, as an experienced hairdresser, launched an Instagram blog, attracting clients and integrating into Belarusian society.

Coordination and Working in partnership

In line with UNHCR’s Mandate, the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) is implemented in Belarus to support the government-led response. The Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) plays a pivotal role in providing strategic direction, overseeing the implementation of the Refugee Response Plan (RRP), and engaging in contingency planning and preparedness for potential increases in new arrivals.

The Operational Working Group (OWG) and Information Management Working Group (IMWG) are central to promoting coordination and mitigating duplication for the effective and efficient use of resources. Additionally, various ad-hoc taskforces provide technical and response capacities to support the RCF in addressing specific challenges and needs that may arise. These structures are vital components of the coordination model, ensuring a streamlined and well-organized response to the refugee situation in Belarus.

The Operational Working Group (OWG) is in the process of preparing the 2024 regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP). The 2024 RRRP is aligned to the regional parameters of four Strategic Objectives, accompanied by six Cross-Cutting Priorities: with the central focus on refugees continuing to have effective access to legal status, protection, and rights in host countries; ensuring refugees with specific needs and vulnerabilities, including persons in transit, continue to have access to targeted support and assistance; strengthening the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in their host communities and increasing their self-reliance.

IOM | UNDP | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | WHO

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LINKS

[REGIONAL DATA PORTAL – UKRAINE SITUATION RRP – RRP RECALIBRATION – BELARUS RRP SUMMARY DOCUMENT – REFUGEE FUNDING TRACKER](#)