



Belarus

31 May 2022

The Government of Belarus allows all refugees from Ukraine to access Belarusian territory and asylum procedures if they wish to seek protection. Third country nationals fleeing the war in Ukraine and traveling to their countries of origin or permanent residence are allowed to enter, transit and exit Belarus visa-free. All COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted at border crossing points.

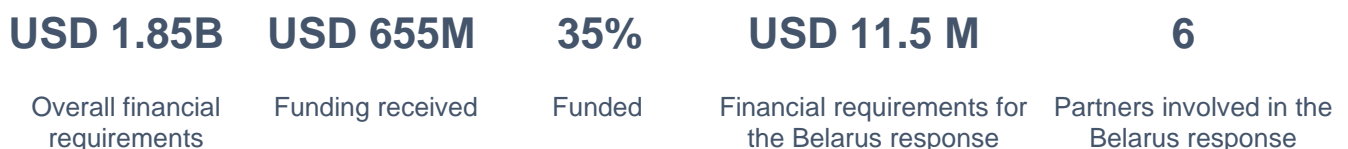
Starting from the second half of April, only few refugees have crossed the border directly from Ukraine. Most refugees from Ukraine transit through the EU, mostly through Poland, and self-accommodate in Belarus with relatives or friends. Others are supported by the local authorities and partners in identifying 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 31 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 breakdown are estimates based on data collected by the BRCS (sample size: 1,578 individuals).

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

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

Operational Context

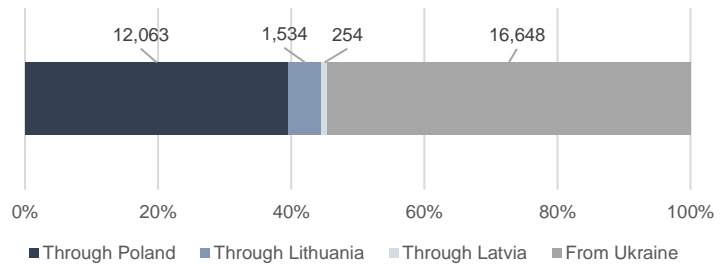
As of December 2021, Belarus was host to 2,732 refugees and 128 asylum-seekers. Amongst those, 2,378 refugees and 14 asylum-seekers were Ukrainian nationals, most of whom arrived in Belarus due to conflict that had erupted in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in 2014. Asylum-seekers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

A total of 30,499 refugees from Ukraine have crossed the border to Belarus from 24 February to 31 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. 13,851 persons have transited through EU countries before entering Belarus. Due to the absence of border controls, it is unclear how many Ukrainians are arriving through Russia.

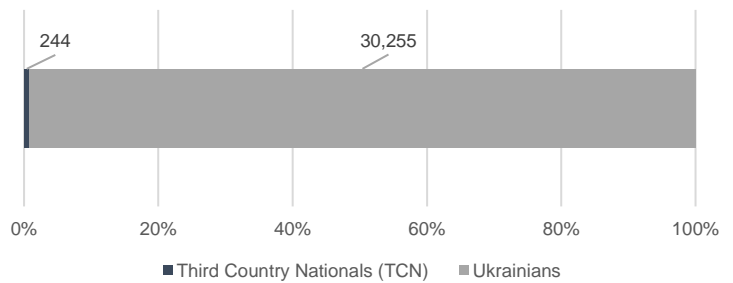
Since 24 February and as of 31 May, 8,027 refugees from Ukraine have registered with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) for a legal status in Belarus. 4,944 Ukrainians have been recorded by the MOI's Department on Citizenship and Migration (DCM) as persons with permits for temporary stay up to 90 days. 875 Ukrainians have applied for asylum in Belarus. Out of those, 163 have been granted complementary protection while the other applications remain pending. 1,526 have applied for 1-year temporary residence permits. 682 have applied for permanent residence permits.

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

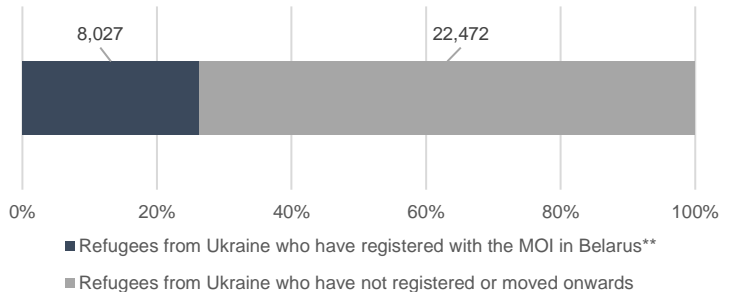
30,499 refugees from Ukraine have crossed to Belarus (since 24 February 2022)*



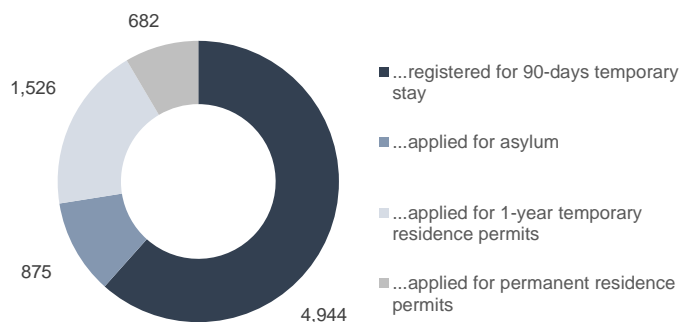
244 Third Country Nationals*



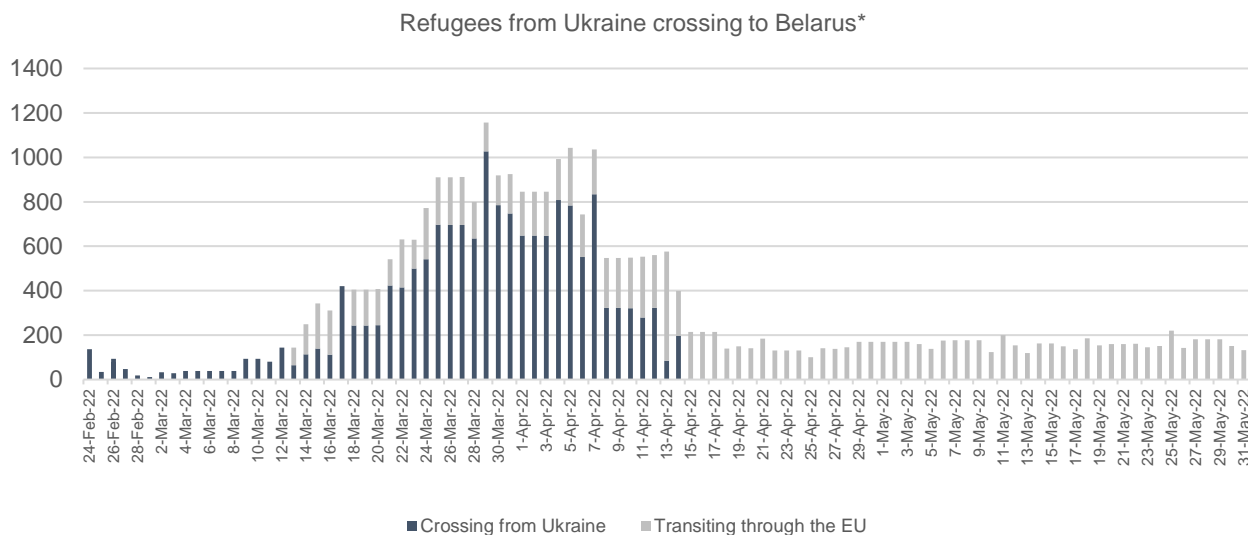
8,027 registered refugees from Ukraine**



Registered refugees from Ukraine that have... **



Most refugees arriving in Belarus from Ukraine come from the regions around Kyiv and Chernihiv. In recent weeks, an increasing number of Ukrainians from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are arriving through Russia and the EU. Groups of people at heightened risk include women; female-headed households; children, especially unaccompanied and separated children (UASC); elderly people; 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.



*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 statistics are based on data provided by MOI's DCM.

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

UNHCR regularly monitors the **access to territory, temporary stay, and asylum procedures, as well as reception conditions** of refugees from Ukraine. UNHCR provides legal counselling 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 may be in need for international protection and who are not covered by the temporary stay arrangements for Ukrainians. From the beginning of March to end of May 2022, 765 persons (422 cases) have been counselled by the RCS at their offices and through phone calls. Out of those, 429 persons have applied for asylum in Belarus and 336 benefitted from temporary stay arrangements for Ukrainians. The RCS also conducted five visits to TAFs where it provided counselling to about 120 persons through individual and group sessions. The information provided to refugees at the TAFs included how to lodge an asylum application 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, and

receipt of allowances from the Government, including pensions. In addition, UNHCR has counselled 64 refugees from Ukraine through its hotline and counselling sessions at its office in Minsk.

IOM assists nationals of third countries who are not in need for international protection to voluntarily return to their countries of origin when it is possible to do so in a safe and orderly manner. Two nationals from Tajikistan have been assisted in returning to their country of origin and one person with dual nationality (Ukrainian-Russian) was assisted in moving to Russia.

UNICEF has signed a new case management partnership agreement with a Gomel-based CSO “Let’s Help Children Together” to assess and identify the needs of families with children and refer them to the relevant services. Case management work will also be conducted in the Brest region in direct partnership with the local authorities. 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)**.

Partners are also working towards supporting the Government and local partners in providing assistance and psychosocial support to **women survivors and those at-risk of gender-based violence (GBV)**. UNFPA and the BRCS Gomel and Brest branches established a counseling and referral mechanism based on the emerging needs of women, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities. The piloted mechanism will be scaled up in other oblasts of the country. UNFPA supported the establishment of an Orange Safe Space in Gomel for counselling and service provision particularly for women, elderly women, and women with disabilities. The same type of safe space is planned for Brest to be established in June. UNFPA supported the establishment and equipment of the BRCS crisis center in Brest, which will serve as an entry point for immediate support and referral for essential services, primarily for Ukrainian refugee women with children and elderly people.

UNFPA has conducted three trainings for 47 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 additional trainings 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.

A key response priority is **psycho-social support (PSS)** particularly for children and their caregivers, women, older persons, and persons with disabilities, who might have experienced stress and anxiety including those who witnessed violence. A psychosocial mobile team was started by UNICEF. Over 180 children benefitted from PSS activities during the reporting period. 1,000 copies (5,000 printed in total) of psychological first aid information material on dealing with stress and assisting children in situations of anxiety, including support available in Belarus, have been distributed by UNICEF among refugees from Ukraine in TAFs in Gomel and Brest regions.

Partners are collaborating on conducting **joint training sessions**. 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. Through UNICEF’s partnership with the Republican Center for Psychological Aid, 60 pedagogues and psychologists working with children and refugees, volunteers and frontline workers of the Red Cross, NGOs and service providers received training on working with children in crisis situations and stress resilience for frontline workers. Within the framework of UNDP’s support for the BRCS, 127 volunteers and specialists were trained to provide assistance to refugees, including psycho-social support.

Given the expected high percentage of female headed households, elderly and disabled people 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. More funding can be made available

as needed. Identification of needs is being done on a vulnerability basis, considering gender, age and disability specifics. The Commission on Assistance will meet in early June to decide on applications for cash assistance.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Partners are working together towards strengthening the capacity of the Belarusian Red Cross Society (BRCS) in **collecting age and gender disaggregated data**. 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.

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

UNDP Accelerator Lab partners with the BRCS to develop a **digital platform** that will better connect refugees with support services and opportunities available for them across Belarus. The platform will also be used by BRCS volunteers as a tool to support counselling for refugees. UNDP advocates for digital solutions that are inclusive. The platform will benefit local communities and representatives of vulnerable groups. The design of the platform will be demand-driven and informed by the results of a continuous needs assessment of the target groups. Capacities of the target groups will be considered to ensure the accessibility and user-friendly presentation of the information.

RRP 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. 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. 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 partners, including local authorities, social-pedagogical centers, BRCS and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to strengthen and scale-up Safe Space programmes in schools in the regions where there may be a high presence of refugees, in particular in Gomel and Brest regions.



HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

To address the current crisis situation, the Ministry of Health (MoH) issued a letter, which stipulates that Ukrainian citizens who fled to Belarus through “humanitarian corridors” are eligible to receive medical treatment on an equal level as 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” and are coming to Belarus “to obtain permits for temporary and permanent residence” from payment for medical services provided by state healthcare organizations.

IOM established referral pathways for refugees from Ukraine with serious medical conditions to the Gomel regional hospital for further **medical examination and treatment**.

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

WHO suggested to the MoH and BRCS to reallocate a part of four **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. 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 250 USD). 13 beneficiaries were supported with these vouchers.

IOM has hired one psychologist to receive referrals from psychosocial services and provide follow-up **mental health consultations** to those in need. 17 refugees and migrants have so far received psychosocial support and psychological assistance and counselling.

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 including for victims or witnesses of violence and/or abuse.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Some groups of people fleeing from Ukraine to Belarus, particularly adult third country nationals who are still 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 regions other than Gomel region. Individual cases of persons in need for medical treatment whose medical expenses were not covered 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 psychosocial support. There are acute manifestations of mental health issues and psychological distress in children and adolescents, women, and elderly 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.

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 has the capacity to re-open the transit points whenever and wherever the need is identified.



SHELTER AND BASIC NEEDS

Achievements and Impact

Since the closure of the TAFs, refugees from Ukraine arriving in Belarus need to self-accommodate with relatives or friends or to seek other accommodation. BRCS and the regional authorities are supporting refugees in identifying opportunities for accommodation, some of them linked to employment opportunities. Gomel and Brest Oblasts are the primary regions to accommodate refugees from Ukraine. UNHCR is supporting refugees from Ukraine to self-accommodate in the host communities through providing them with needed textile products. UNHCR has purchased in Gomel region 185 items (50 blankets, 50 sets of bed linen, 85 pillows) and has started distributing these to 16 individuals. More items will be purchased as the needs will be identified.

IOM has also started to provide direct assistance to refugees from Ukraine and third country nationals not in need for international protection who approach IOM's office in Minsk and IOM's project site in Gomel. The needs of those approaching IOM are being assessed. As of 31 May 2022, more than 60 refugees from Ukraine were assisted directly with hygiene items, food kits, and non-food items. Clothes and shoes for the total amount of around USD 11,000 were donated by IOM to the Gomel branch of BRCS for further distribution among refugees from Ukraine. One kitchen set was procured and handed over to one family in Gomel region.

Partners have re-channeled funds and assistance that had previously been allocated or purchased for the EU-Belarus mixed movement situation in Grodno region. 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 families. UNHCR has re-channeled 8,000 thermal blankets and 2,000 mattresses to the Ukraine refugee situation. More than 280 blankets have been distributed to refugees from Ukraine at border crossing points during the registration process and to TAFs as needed. UNICEF procured locally 3,600 hygiene kits for approximately 6,600 individuals. More than 340 individuals over the reporting period have received the kits. IOM re-channeled to refugees from Ukraine in all regions of Belarus 7,800 hygiene kits and 12,400 food kits that had been purchased previously by BRCS.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Due to decreasing numbers of arrivals and the sanatoria being booked for commercial purposes, the TAFs have been fully vacated. Other options must be sought in collaboration with the local authorities and BRCS. The programmes by partners are being adapted accordingly. The dormitory in Brest region and the regular TAF that hosts asylum-seekers in Gomel region continue to temporarily host about ten refugees from Ukraine each.

UNHCR supported the renovation of the BRCS crisis room in Gomel with 25,000 USD last year. The crisis room provides temporary accommodation to families in need, particularly women at risk or survivors of violence. Since the beginning of the Ukraine situation, the crisis room is increasingly needed. UNHCR is currently assessing the possibility of investing another 5,000-10,000 USD for further expansion and winterization.

Some refugees who are relocating to private accommodation 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 school children, clothes, shoes, and medicines. Partners are addressing these needs through providing basic needs items and cash assistance to vulnerable populations.

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. Work permit procedures are being expedited and IOM has assisted with covering the fees for 19 employment permits. One beneficiary was assisted with the translation of the documents for employment purposes, and one was assisted with re-confirmation of the diploma in Belarus for further job finding.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Partners will need to ensure that individuals have access to accurate and timely information to make informed choices. UNFPA, UNICEF and UNHCR have started a mapping of referral pathways. 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.

UNDP is working to strengthen BRCS' capacity to deliver crisis response through engaging UN Volunteers (UNVs). UNVs will assist with information management and conducting a continuous needs and capacity assessment of refugees and local communities to inform comprehensive activities for refugees' socio-economic integration. The assessment will use human-centered design and continuously engage key stakeholders to inform the development of context-driven solutions. Local communities, vulnerable populations and gender dimension will be an integral part of the assessment.



LOGISTICS, SUPPLY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Achievements and Impact

UNHCR has allocated 10,000 USD for this purpose of transportation of new arrivals from border crossing points to BRCS. IOM also started assisting with transportation for Ukrainian arrivals. One beneficiary was assisted with transportation as of 31 May.

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. Regional local authorities 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 document to outline the multi-partner, multi-sector response strategy and financial requirements in Belarus.

IOM | UNDP | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | WHO

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LINKS

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