

HIGHLIGHTS

As of 12 May, **488 people benefited from Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme** in 2022.

The IOM-supported hotline on safe migration and combatting human trafficking received **246 requests for information on entry to, transit through, exit from Belarus** from Ukrainian refugees and third country nationals fleeing the war in Ukraine since 24 February.

Temporary accommodation in sanatoriums for Ukrainian refugees were emptied by Belarusian authorities, causing people to find shelter solutions on their own.



IOM staff talking to the beneficiary of the AVRR programme accommodated at the hotel in Minsk © IOM 2022

SITUATION OVERVIEW

IOM Belarus continues to receive requests for assistance, including for assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR), provision of food and non-food items (NFI) from migrants stranded at Belarus' border with Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland and from others located throughout the country.

People fleeing the war in Ukraine continue to enter Belarus mainly through Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, while the number of people entering Belarus directly through the Ukraine-Belarus border has been low recently.

According to the State Border Committee of Belarus, from 29 April-12 May, 2,322 people entered Belarus from Ukraine. **Since 24 February, 27,806 people have entered the country** (902 Belarusians, 26,660 Ukrainians and 244 third country nationals).

IOM has received an increasing number of requests from national stakeholders and migrants fleeing the war in Ukraine to provide protection-related services. This includes emergency health care, transportation, humanitarian return, employment pathways support, and legal aid, among other areas.

Initially, Belarusian authorities provided Ukrainian refugees in need of shelter with temporary accommodation in local sanatoriums, predominantly in Gomel region. However, in the reporting period all the sanatoriums were emptied by the authorities, and only the most vulnerable people were allowed to remain in the sanatoriums. According to the information available, there is only one vulnerable person, who is still there.

CONTACTS

CURRENT RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

In Belarus, IOM has a permanent office in Minsk, with additional project sites in Grodno and Gomel. IOM continued to provide support to migrants stranded in the forest areas near Belarus' borders with EU countries and in urban settlements. IOM primarily provides emergency food and hygiene items, as well as voluntary return to the country of origin.

IOM continues to coordinate with local and national stakeholders to provide timely and relevant assistance to people fleeing Ukraine. Currently, the scope of assistance includes provision of food and non-food items, psychosocial and psychological support, medical assistance, voluntary return to the country of origin or permanent stay for third country nationals, coverage of transportation expenses, employment support including payment for vocational trainings, for fees to obtain work permit and for legal assistance, reintegration assistance for victims of human trafficking.

On the awareness raising front, IOM has been disseminating broadly the information on IOM support services available to those fleeing the war in Ukraine – through its local partners in Gomel region, the IOM hotline on safe migration, and by IOM frontline staff.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

People who have registered for AVRR and are awaiting departure are accommodated either in a hotel or hostel in Minsk and are provided with **three meals a day**. On average, 15 migrants receive accommodation per week.

IOM's project site in Grodno continues to respond to requests from stranded migrants residing in border areas and urban settlements and Ukrainian refugees arriving to the Grodno region. Since 29 April, IOM provided **5 emergency food kits** and **12 hygiene kits** to migrants in the area, alongside regular provision of AVRR counselling. Local IOM staff continue to monitor the arrivals of Ukrainian refugees to Grodno.

IOM's project site in Gomel continues functioning to ensure a prompt and targeted response to assist people fleeing Ukraine and to efficiently coordinate response activities with local partners.

To provide information support to potential beneficiaries as well as key actors in Gomel, IOM has prepared a **leaflet for migrants coming from Ukraine with essential information on the assistance IOM is placed to provide**. This leaflet will be disseminated among potential beneficiaries and partners.

IOM has also donated over **800 clothing and footwear items**, with a value amounting to **USD 11,000**, for **vulnerable Ukrainian migrants** to the Belarusian Red Cross (BRC).

<p style="text-align: center;"> ПРОЕКТНАЯ КОМАНДА ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬСТВА МОМ В Г. ГОМЕЛЬ</p> <p style="text-align: center;">г. Гомель, ул. Интернациональная 10А, офис 716-А +375 (29) 695-79-41</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> ОФИС ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬСТВА МОМ В БЕЛАРУСИ</p> <p style="text-align: center;">г. Минск, перушок Горный 3 +375 (17) 288-27-42/43 iomminsk@iom.int</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Помощь предоставляется бесплатно с соблюдением правил конфиденциальности</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"> ООН МИГРАЦИЯ</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ВАМ ПРИШЛОСЬ ПОКИНУТЬ УКРАИНУ И ВАМ НУЖНА ПОМОЩЬ?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>
<p>Представительство Международной организации по миграции (МОМ) в Беларуси с участием партнеров оказывает следующие виды помощи мигрантам из Украины (как гражданам Украины, так и гражданам третьих стран):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Продукты питания, одежда, обувь, гигиенические принадлежности. 2 Психологическая и психосоциальная помощь и поддержка. 3 Содействие в получении специализированной медицинской помощи и лекарственных средств. <p><i>Предоставляется в индивидуальном порядке после рассмотрения каждого конкретного случая и является обременением помощи сверх того, что предоставляется государством бесплатно на уровне первичной помощи и бесплатной экстренной помощи.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Содействие в добровольном возвращении на родину для граждан третьих стран. 5 Помощь с оплатой транспортных услуг на территории Республики Беларусь. 6 Помощь в содействии трудоустройству на территории Республики Беларусь: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – оплата государственной пошлины для получения специального разрешения на право занятия трудовой деятельностью; – обучение на профессиональных курсах, а также курсов переподготовки/повышения квалификации; – юридическая помощь по вопросам трудоустройства, в том числе оплата легализации документов и стоимости подтверждения дипломов. 7 Помощь для пострадавших от торговли людьми и эксплуатации: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – бесплатное пребывание в Реабилитационном центре МОМ в г. Минск; – психологическая помощь; – юридическая помощь; – медицинская помощь; – содействие занятости (оплата курсов, покупка инструментов). 	<p>Если вы хотите получить информацию о безопасном въезде и пребывании в Беларуси, а также выезде за границу, обратитесь на бесплатную горячую линию по безопасной миграции и противодействию торговле людьми:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">113 (для стационарных телефонов)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">8 (801) 201-55-55 (для мобильных телефонов)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.bpwrest.by (для онлайн-консультаций)</p> <p>Горячая линия работает ежедневно с 8:00 до 20:00.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>

Leaflet with information on assistance provided by IOM to people fleeing Ukraine

IOM is at the final stage of signing an **agreement with a transportation company**. Once contracted, the transportation company will be used for the purposes of IOM's project site in Gomel, including the transportation of IOM frontline staff to provide direct assistance to the migrants and refugees based in remote areas of Gomel region, including psychological support, the delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as any logistical support for IOM operations in the region.

On 4-5 May, **meetings** with key actors (Belarusian Red Cross, Labour Committee of Gomel Regional Executive Committee, Department for Citizenship and Migration) were held **in Gomel** to collect information on the sanatoriums that were emptied and to put in place new working arrangements with our partners. During these meetings, essential information on the location of migrants was collected. IOM is planning to provide targeted direct assistance and support to the migrants in need at their new locations. As a result of the meeting with representatives of Department for Citizenship and Migration, IOM will receive on a daily basis updated information on newly arrived migrants from Ukraine who are registered by the Department.

HEALTH ASSISTANCE

In our efforts to develop a referral system for people with serious medical conditions, IOM procured **30 vouchers** for medications from a big pharmacy chain for further dissemination among people fleeing Ukraine to cover urgent needs for prescription medications. IOM hired four psychologists to provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to vulnerable Ukrainian migrants in the temporary accommodation facilities in Gomel region. However, as the temporary accommodation facilities were emptied, it is now impossible to provide MHPSS support there. IOM is exploring the ways to proceed. **One field staff member was contracted to work at the project site in Gomel and ensure the provision of immediate psychosocial support as well as vulnerability identification and referrals of vulnerable migrants.**

PROTECTION

On 4 May, within the framework of the **multidisciplinary group (MDG) meeting for Brest region** – an integral part of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for the protection of vulnerable migrants - IOM Belarus sensitized key country counter-trafficking stakeholders on the **issue of unaccompanied migrant children**, including those fleeing Ukraine, who do not wish to claim refugee status and are not covered by the Belarus legislation. This is a step towards building momentum for strengthening the national migrant protection and anti-trafficking framework following the Best Interests of the Child approach. In late April, the first MDG meeting in 2022 was held in Minsk with UNICEF and UNHCR joining. IOM will be further advocating for this issue within the platforms of other MDG meetings to be held in all remaining regions of Belarus across May-June 2022.



Participants of the MDG meeting for Brest region © IOM 2022

The three **migrant referral pathways for protection services** that were previously set up are currently operational on a community level, government level, and through the IOM-supported hotline administered by the NGO partner, Business Women Club. On a community level, IOM field staff in Gomel are providing protection information, counselling and ensuring referrals of vulnerable Ukrainian migrants to available support services.

Through the established protection referral pathways, **IOM Belarus has supported 16 Ukrainians to secure their employment** in the field of agriculture through the payment for special employment permits. IOM is in the process of **supporting one case of a female Ukrainian migrant through legal aid to facilitate her smooth employment** in Belarus. Another case is in the pipeline for a Ukrainian migrant wishing to benefit from **vocational training courses**.

Forthcoming plans on protection include extending reintegration assistance to potential victims of human trafficking in the premises of the IOM Rehabilitation Centre, dissemination of information materials/leaflets (on trafficking in persons (TIP) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) risks, safe migration hotline promotion, re-location and mobility assistance, and integration assistance to Ukrainian refugees through facilitating their employment). IOM currently provides integration assistance that includes integration grants for Technical and Vocational Education and Trainings (TVET), micro-business/entrepreneurship courses, assistance with the payment of administrative fees to ensure employment in compliance with the Belarusian legislation, legal assistance/counselling on employment, printing and distributing manuals on an effective job search and employment of foreigners in Belarus.

ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION (AVRR)

From 29 April-12 May, IOM provided AVRR support to 21 migrants, totaling **488 returnees** since the beginning of 2022.

Currently, while awaiting departure through AVRR, **19 people remain at the hostel and urban accommodation while 14 migrants are accommodated in a hotel near Minsk Airport.**

As of 12 May, IOM Belarus has provided AVRR support to 488 migrants (345 males and 143 females), including 124 children, in 2022. Most of the returnees were Iraqi nationals (80.5 per cent), while other AVRR beneficiaries have returned to Cuba (4.5 per cent), Sri Lanka (2.5 per cent), Turkey (1.5 per cent), Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, India, Russia, Cameroon, Somalia, Republic of Congo, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina-Faso, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Iran, Kenya, and Algeria.

Within the reporting period, IOM Belarus provided assistance with accommodation, food, and PCR tests for COVID-19. IOM also provided **transit assistance** to two 17-year-old siblings from the Democratic Republic of Congo, though they were not a part of the AVRR programme. The unaccompanied minors were referred to IOM for logistical assistance by law enforcement agencies of the Brest Oblast.

One returnee to Ghana was assisted with the **receipt of a travel document** from the relevant Embassy.



AVRR beneficiaries at the hotel near Minsk Airport © IOM 2022



Child riding a bicycle in front of the hotel near Minsk Airport © IOM 2022

COOPERATION WITH PARTNERS

The Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers, IOM's partner NGO in the Grodno and Gomel regions, provided 104 consultations with migrants from Ukraine on AVRR options, mainly in Grodno region.

In the reporting period, IOM participated in a working group which has been created within the framework of Refugee Coordination Forum for information exchange among relevant stakeholders – including UN agencies, governmental institutions, and BRC as a representative of civil society.

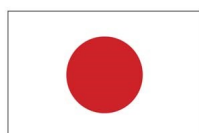
The establishment of the **Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)** is being negotiated with relevant stakeholders, mainly Belarus Government and civil society organizations. A number of meetings were conducted with the BRC and Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of Interior.

IOM, in coordination with the Business Women Club located in Brest city, continues to provide information to requesting migrants and refugees on counter-trafficking and safe migration through its **hotline**. From 24 February to 9 May, the hotline received **246 requests for information on entry to, transit through, and exit from Belarus in connection with the war in Ukraine**, which amounts to approximately 19.9 per cent of all consultations provided during this period. **During 3-9 May**, such requests amounted to **25 per cent** of all consultations provided, while a week before they totaled to 19 per cent. The topics of other requests received by the hotline include employment, movement restrictions related to COVID-19, education abroad, etc.

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