

## HIGHLIGHTS

Since the start of the war, IOM has provided direct assistance to a total of **348 persons** fleeing Ukraine.

**864 surveys** were conducted through IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

The IOM-supported hotline on safe migration and combatting human trafficking received over **519 requests for information on entry to, transit through, and exit from Belarus (24 per cent of the total number of queries)** from Ukrainian refugees and TCNs fleeing the war in Ukraine since 24 February.

**547 people benefited from Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme** in 2022.

## SITUATION OVERVIEW

Since 24 February, **37,094** people have entered the country (902 Belarusians, **35,948** Ukrainians, and 244 third country nationals), as reported by the State Border Committee of Belarus.

While there have been gaps in the data, particularly on where arrivals stay in Belarus and on their needs, these gaps are now being addressed with the roll out of IOM's DTM methodology in partnership with the Belarusian Red Cross (BRC). Improved data collection and analysis will allow for a stronger evidence base for humanitarian actors to respond to the needs of these arrivals. The first preliminary report is being drafted and expected to be ready in the coming week.



IOM staff in Gomel hands over a bag with food items to the Ukrainian refugee © IOM 2022

## CONTACTS

## CURRENT RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

IOM staff are currently working in three Belarusian cities – Minsk, Gomel and Grodno. At the same time, there are plans to establish IOM project sites in Brest, Mogilev and Vitebsk to ensure provision of direct assistance to Ukrainian refugees and other migrants. Thus, IOM will be present in all regional centres of Belarus.

To identify immediate and longer-term needs of the refugees and migrants fleeing Ukraine, IOM Belarus has been continuously conducting vulnerability screenings. Since the start of the war, IOM has screened and assessed the needs of 592 beneficiaries. The main needs identified are food, hygiene items, footwear and clothes, medical support, including mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), as well as employment generation activities. The identified vulnerable groups include families with children, persons with medical conditions, older persons, and female-headed households, among others. IOM continues to provide all requested items and services to refugees and migrants.

IOM is providing direct assistance to refugees and migrants fleeing Ukraine through the distribution of food and hygiene items, clothing, and footwear and provision of accommodation support, medical assistance, psychosocial support, transportation services across Belarus, employment-related support, reintegration support for victims of human trafficking, and voluntary return for third country nationals.

In the reporting period, 31 people approached IOM field staff in Gomel while IOM's office in Minsk received 60 requests for support from Ukrainian refugees. Twenty-six beneficiaries were contacted by Grodno local staff. In total, the needs of all 117 beneficiaries were assessed **from 24 June to 7 July** and **assistance – humanitarian and protection – was provided to 128 people**, including those whose needs were assessed in previous reporting periods.

**In total, assistance was provided to 348 people who fled Ukraine, which includes both humanitarian and protection assistance.**

### HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Since IOM established a system of direct assistance provision to refugees and migrants fleeing Ukraine in mid-May, **it has assisted 310 people through several forms of humanitarian aid.**

**In the reporting period, 105 beneficiaries received several forms of humanitarian assistance from IOM:**

- 62 food kits were delivered to refugees from Ukraine;
- 62 hygiene kits were distributed to beneficiaries;
- 33 beneficiaries received clothes and footwear;
- 2 families received diapers and special food for babies;
- 3 beneficiaries were provided with accommodation support;
- 6 people received vouchers for medicines;
- Medicines and medical supplies were procured for 4 vulnerable beneficiaries;
- 2 people were referred to medical institutions for further treatment;
- Psychosocial support and consultations were provided to 4 people;
- 29 people were provided with information and counselling support, and referrals to other institutions and organizations for best solutions.



Bags with food and hygiene items provided to people fleeing Ukraine © IOM 2022

In addition to the Ukrainian response, assistance is provided on a permanent basis to other migrants, mainly those approaching IOM for consultations and with requests for voluntary return to their countries of origin. Those who do not have shelter are accommodated in a hotel or hostel. Hot meals are provided to an average of 20 migrants accommodated in the hotel every week. Migrants who accept IOM support in the hostel are provided with food and hygiene kits on a regular basis, as well.

## PROTECTION

In addition to the above-mentioned humanitarian assistance, IOM also supports refugees fleeing Ukraine with securing employment in Belarus. **In the reporting period, 13 beneficiaries received protection assistance:** one person benefitted from IOM's payment to secure an employment permit; seven persons were assisted with the payment of employment-related translation certified by a notary; and five persons started vocational training courses in English, information technology, machine operation, hairdressing, and cosmetology, respectively.

**In total, 39 people have already benefitted from employment facilitation and legal aid services:** 22 state fees for employment permits were paid for by IOM; 10 persons received employment related assistance and legal aid (payment for services); and 7 persons were assisted through IOM sponsorship for vocational training.

Four TCNs who fled Ukraine have been provided with voluntary humanitarian return to their countries of origin since 24 February 2022, including one person during the reporting period.

## ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION (AVRR)

IOM Belarus continues to provide AVRR services to vulnerable migrants within the current EU-funded project, which ends on 17 July 2022. Although the programme ends shortly, IOM continues to observe an influx of migrants inquiring about AVRR support from different parts of the country. To ensure uninterrupted service provision to the vulnerable migrants, IOM Belarus is exploring opportunities to fund AVRR support services.

Currently, 18 AVRR applicants are awaiting departure in the contracted hotel in the vicinity of Minsk Airport. Eighteen beneficiaries are accommodated in the urban hostel, while seven are accommodated in other parts of the country while they wait for their return.

As of 7 July, **IOM Belarus has provided AVRR support to 547 migrants** (387 males and 160 females), including 132 children, in 2022. The number of Iraqi beneficiaries has been decreasing recently but still accounts for the highest share of the returnees (73 per cent). At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of Cuban nationals contacting IOM for voluntary return assistance (10 per cent). Other countries of origin of migrants returning through the AVRR programme include Sri Lanka, Guinea, Nigeria, Republic of Türkiye, Ghana, Egypt, India, the Russian Federation, Cameroon, Somalia, Republic of Congo, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina-Faso, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Iran, Kenya, Algeria, Georgia, Norway, Benin and Uzbekistan.



IOM personnel accompany AVRR beneficiaries at the airport before their departure © IOM 2022

## COOPERATION WITH PARTNERS

IOM's cooperation with the UN, NGOs, and state partners on the Ukraine response continued. IOM took part in the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) on 5 July, where the latest arrival trends of Ukrainian refugees in Belarus were discussed, as well as challenges in terms of assistance provision.

A field visit to Mogilev was organized to meet with the key partners, such as the Mogilev branch of the BRC and the Mogilev branch of the NGO “Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers” (BMMW), to discuss cooperation at the regional level.

IOM's DTM was launched in Belarus in June, with the involvement of the BRC and with the support of the Ministry of the Interior. As of 6 July, 864 DTM surveys have been collected and the first preliminary report is currently being drafted and is planned to be finalized this week. DTM is piloted by IOM, with direct support from BRC volunteers and staff. The pilot phase will be completed at the end of July 2022.

Field visits to enumerators in Vitebsk, Grodno, Brest and Gomel were conducted by the DTM Country Coordinator. During these visits, coordination meetings with the team leaders and enumerators were organized to discuss data collection processes, target population, and the survey form.

IOM continues to work with three migrant referral pathways to provide protection services for Ukrainian refugees and migrants fleeing Ukraine: on a government level; on a community level; and through the IOM-supported hotline on safe migration. The hotline plays a crucial role in referrals of Ukrainian refugees and TCNs to available in-country services, in particular those provided by IOM. The hotline services are provided by the public association, “Business Women Club”, and supported by IOM. The hotline provides consultations on various migration-related topics, including employment, movement restrictions related to COVID-19, and education abroad, among other areas. Currently, one of the most popular requests is for information on entry to, transit through, and exit from Belarus in connection with the war in Ukraine. From 21 June to 4 July, the hotline provided 65 such consultations, which amounts to 28.9 per cent of all the consultations provided. Overall, since 24 February, the hotline provided 519 consultations on movements related to the war in Ukraine.

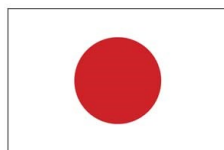
Cooperation with IOM's NGO partner BMMW continued in Gomel region. In particular, the NGO provided consultations to Ukrainian refugees on the best solutions for further movement and referred 13 people to IOM for further assistance.

IOM took part in a roundtable discussion on the results and lessons learned from the Ukraine response as they can be understood in relation to the harsh humanitarian situation experienced by the thousands of migrants who were stranded between Belarus and the EU in 2021-2022. The roundtable was organized by the BRC, while representatives of the Ministry of Interior, State Border Committee, NGOs, and UN agencies took part in the event and shared best practices and lessons learned.

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