

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Over 600 people** remain at the Bruzgi logistics facility.

**78 people** benefited from the AVRR programme in the first two weeks of 2022.

**333 kg of food items and 98L of milk** delivered by IOM during the reporting period.



Migrants outside the logistics facility near the Belarus-Poland border © IOM 2021/ Hanna Kalichava

→ Health assistance has been provided through mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), pre-departure embarkation (PEC) and COVID-19 tests

## SITUATION OVERVIEW

There continues to be no accurate data on the number of stranded migrants in Belarus, however, according to IOM estimates, over 600 migrants are still accommodated at the logistics centre in the vicinity of the border crossing point Bruzgi at the Belarus-Poland border. These migrants have access to basic emergency assistance, food and non-food items (NFIs), and counselling on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR).

IOM has scaled up its capacity in Belarus in accordance with how the migration situation has developed over the past months. As such the mission has grown from 24 to 33 staff. In addition, a total of nine specialists on emergency coordination, camp coordination and camp management, AVRR, resource management, and data management and other fields have been deployed so far to strengthen IOM Belarus programming and response.

IOM Belarus project site in Grodno city, close to the border area, has been functioning since the end of December 2021. This improved IOM's ability to maintain regular contact with migrants accommodated at the logistics facility and provided the opportunity to deliver more humanitarian aid and to safely return home to those who have voluntarily decided to do so.

Between 7 and 13 January, 25 people at the logistics facility were registered to further benefit from the AVRR programme. On 17 January, they will be transported from the logistics facility to a hotel near Minsk airport to receive pre-departure assistance. IOM continues its regular visits to the facility to deliver humanitarian assistance based on the results of available needs assessments, and on the analysis of demand for food and NFIs already delivered. During the visit on 12 January, IOM distributed 210kg of bread, 123kg of fruit, and 98L of milk for children.

## CONTACTS

## NEEDS OVERVIEW

The priority needs have not changed fundamentally over the course of the past week. Humanitarian actors continue to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants stranded in Belarus, both at the border and in urban areas, while at the same time providing viable alternative solutions, including voluntary return to the country of origin and reintegration there.

First results of the IOM's needs assessment piloted during the first week of January, while not comprehensive, have highlighted urgent needs related to safe shelter, adequate health services, improved sanitary conditions, balanced nutrition, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). This corresponds to IOM's initial observations while delivering assistance.



Beds at the logistics facility where migrants are accommodated © IOM 2021 / Hanna Kalichava

## CURRENT RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

IOM, in partnership with the Belarusian Red Cross (BRC), continues to deliver humanitarian aid including food and NFIs to migrants at the Bruzgi logistics centre as well as to migrants accommodated at a hotel near Minsk airport and awaiting departures to their countries of origin on a regular basis. In addition, IOM provides migrants an opportunity to return to their countries of origin in a safe and dignified way through its AVRR programme.

### HUMANITARIAN AID

During the reporting period, IOM supported migrants stranded at the Belarus-Poland border through the delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid, namely 210kg of bread, 123kg of fruit and 98L of milk for children. Currently, IOM provides humanitarian assistance at the logistics facility once a week, however, possibility of food and NFI delivery to the migrants twice a week is being considered.



IOM delivering humanitarian assistance which is further distributed among migrants with the help of BRC © IOM 2022/ Volha Chabrouskaya

Non-food items, such as clothing (trousers, shoes) and medicines were provided to the migrants accommodated at the hotel near Minsk airport and awaiting return within AVRR programme. The migrants at the hotel are also provided with hot meals three times a day totalling to approximately 1,000 meals during the week.



IOM providing pre-departure assistance to migrants accommodated at the hotel near Minsk airport © IOM 2021/ Olga Borzenkova

After launching IOM's pilot multi-disciplinary needs assessment during the first week of January 2022, the tool was revised. The needs assessment tool was incorporated into the Kobo data collection system, thus ensuring the possibility to conduct regular needs assessments over a long-term period and as soon as it is required. The tool is designed to study any urgent needs on the ground for any type of migration crisis.

Solutions for improvement of sheltering for the migrants stranded at the border were further studied, and meetings with Grodno local partners were held during the reporting period to discuss possible avenues.

IOM's activities and emergency response for stranded migrants in Belarus, including humanitarian aid and AVRR programme, were presented at the meeting of the UN Refugee and Migrant Task Force held on 11 January. Further IOM's activities are planned with due regard to the activities of other UN agencies reported at the meeting.



## ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION (AVRR)

IOM offers AVRR support to migrants to return safely to their countries of origin, as it is one of the few viable support options for migrants wishing to benefit from this opportunity in light of the current impossibility to move onward.

During the reporting period, 31 migrants benefited from the AVRR programme and returned to their countries of origin with IOM assistance via commercial flights. Among them, three migrants were referred to IOM by the Belarusian law enforcement bodies. The others were brought from the logistics centre near the Belarusian-Polish border or stranded in other parts of the country and approached IOM by themselves. Pre-embarkation medical checks ((PEC) and PCR testing were conducted to ensure their safe travel.

Between 7 and 13 January, 27 people were registered at the logistics facility and will be transported to Minsk on 17 January. For the people staying at the hotel and awaiting departure, medicines and clothes (2 pairs of shoes and men's trousers as well as 2 warm coats) were provided.

IOM continues to provide its AVRR services (outreach, counseling, and registration) at Minsk airport every day.

## HEALTH ASSISTANCE

MHPSS services were rendered to the migrants located at the hotel near Minsk airport before their departure and upon their request. Options for the provision of MHPSS support to the migrants stranded at the border were investigated and discussed with the local authorities.

Pre-departure embarkation for all applicants scheduled for the movements is conducted by IOM Minsk Medical Health (MH) unit to assess the condition of the migrants. COVID-19 testing is done by the subcontracted laboratory within 24 hours prior departure.

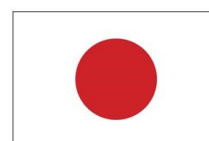
In the reporting period, upon the check-in to the hotel, several applicants were found not ready to travel: 1 person was hospitalized to the local medical establishment for pre-departure stabilization (mixture of diagnosis) and 11 applicants were isolated due to scabies. On 11 January, PECs for 33 applicants were conducted and all the migrants were found fit to travel.

Pre-departure assistance at the airport was also provided for all. All migrants departing under the AVRR programme from Minsk are equipped with travel kits observing COVID-19 requirements. These kits include medical masks, sanitizers, and tissues.



IOM registering people willing to return to their countries of origin into the AVRR programme © IOM 2021/ Hanna Kalichava

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