

Belarus

September 2021

Mandate in the country: UNHCR has been working in Belarus since 1995 helping persons of concern and supporting the Government in strengthening its asylum system and

International legal framework: Belarus is a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol since 2001.

Advocacy: UNHCR advocates for Belarus' accession to the UN Statelessness Conventions in the framework of #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

Refugees	2,915
Asylum-seekers	143
Stateless persons	6,297
Total population of concern	9,355

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Ukraine	2,540	Ukraine	441
Afghanistan	179	Russian Federation	21
Syria	52	Syria	17

*Data source: UNHCR 2020 Global Trends Report and UNHCR data finder platform

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Advocacy: UNHCR successfully advocated for the inclusion of persons of concern into the National Vaccination Plan against COVID-19 for 2021-2022. As a result, refugees are included under the provision for vulnerable groups. The main implementing entity for this provision is Belarusian Red Cross.

Inclusion: UNHCR and partner organizations monitor persons of concern for: (i) access to medical treatment to be ready to facilitate access to healthcare services to those who may encounter difficulties; (ii) loss of jobs due to COVID-19 outbreak to be ready to provide relevant free of charge counselling, as well as direct financial assistance to support their families.

HIGHLIGHTS

209 asylum-seekers

asked protection in Belarus in the first half of 2021. Top countries of origin: Ukraine, Iraq, DR Congo, Turkey, Afghanistan

15 micro-initiatives

have been funded since the beginning of 2020 to support the creation of sustainable livelihood conditions for persons of concern

Statelessness

Belarus is expected to accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions in 2021 upon completion of all national procedures, as pledged in 2019.



In August-September 2021 UNHCR was the only international organization allowed access to the border between Poland and Belarus to provide humanitarian assistance and information on asylum procedure to the group of 32 Afghans stranded there for 1.5 months

Key Priorities

- **Protection monitoring:** UNHCR regularly visits *persons of concern*, state authorities, and local NGOs in different regions. Due to COVID-19 concerns most counselling is now done remotely.
- **Access to territory, state refugee status determination procedure, including through detention monitoring:** UNHCR visits detention facilities to counsel apprehended foreigners on the possibility to apply for asylum in Belarus. The office is also monitoring the situation with migratory movements to / through Belarus (aiming at the neighboring EU Member States) and stands ready to help with effective access to state refugee status determination procedure for those individuals who would like to seek asylum in Belarus, as well as provide necessary assistance to those in need
- **Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus:** UNHCR enhances the Belarusian asylum system and quality of state refugee status determination procedure through capacity building, direct interaction, and liaison with personnel of state asylum authorities at central and regional levels to ensure proper monitoring interview and decisions quality, as well as to channel UNHCR feedback. UNHCR has enjoyed unhampered access to asylum-seekers and their cases from the authorities in spite of COVID-19 overall restrictions
- **Education and Health:** Through the Belarusian Red Cross, UNHCR provides school grants and school supplies to vulnerable families. UNHCR facilitates access of persons of concern to medical services and covers medical expenses for those in special need.
- **Food Security and Basic Needs:** UNHCR provides monthly allowances and emergency financial assistance to most vulnerable families, food, and hygiene kits. Together with Red Cross UNHCR delivered food packages, warm clothes, potable

water, and hygienic kits to the people stranded at the border between Belarus and Poland. In summer 2021 UNHCR coordinated Hugo Boss clothing delivery and distribution in the regions to persons of concern through Belarusian Red Cross

Working with Partners

- UNHCR cooperates with the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, as well as Health, Education, Labour and Social Protection and the State Border Committee. It has 4 non-governmental implementing partners - Belarusian Red Cross Society, Refugee Counselling Service as UNHCR project with “Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers”, Centre for Children and Adolescents “Evrika” and International Public Association “Evolutio”.
- UNHCR is part of UN Country Team engaging in bilateral and joint activities with UN entities

Statelessness

- Belarus is not yet party to the UN Statelessness Conventions. In October 2019 it pledged to accede to the 1954 and the 1961 Conventions, which is expected in 2021
- UNHCR and its partners provide free legal counselling and financial aid to stateless persons to pay state duties required to apply for citizenship and permanent residence on the way to naturalization (203 persons assisted since the beginning of 2020, USD 15,563 provided in financial aid).

UNHCR Presence in (country name)

Staff:

6 National Staff
1 International Staff

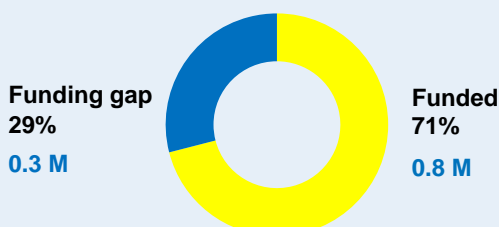
Offices:

1 Country Office in Minsk

Financial information (28 September 2021)

Financial requirements

USD 1.1M



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UNHCR Belarus is grateful to the donors to its 2021 programme:

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