



FROM ECONOMIC SHOCKS TO BUILDING BACK BETTER:

COVID-19 Socio-economic
Response Plan for Belarus

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INTRODUCTION

This document presents the United Nations Country Team (UNCT)'s comprehensive offer for socio-economic response and recovery that addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic from short, medium- and long-term perspectives. This document complements the national Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP), which focused on immediate health priorities. The socio-economic response builds on the initiatives of CPRP and, whereas in the short-term should be complementary and to be implemented in coordination with the ongoing health response, its pillars are also medium and long-term oriented. They have been aligned with ongoing UNCT planning processes in Belarus, including the upcoming UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025. The goal is to ensure the response is embedded in the strategic priorities that were identified by the UNCT over recent years.

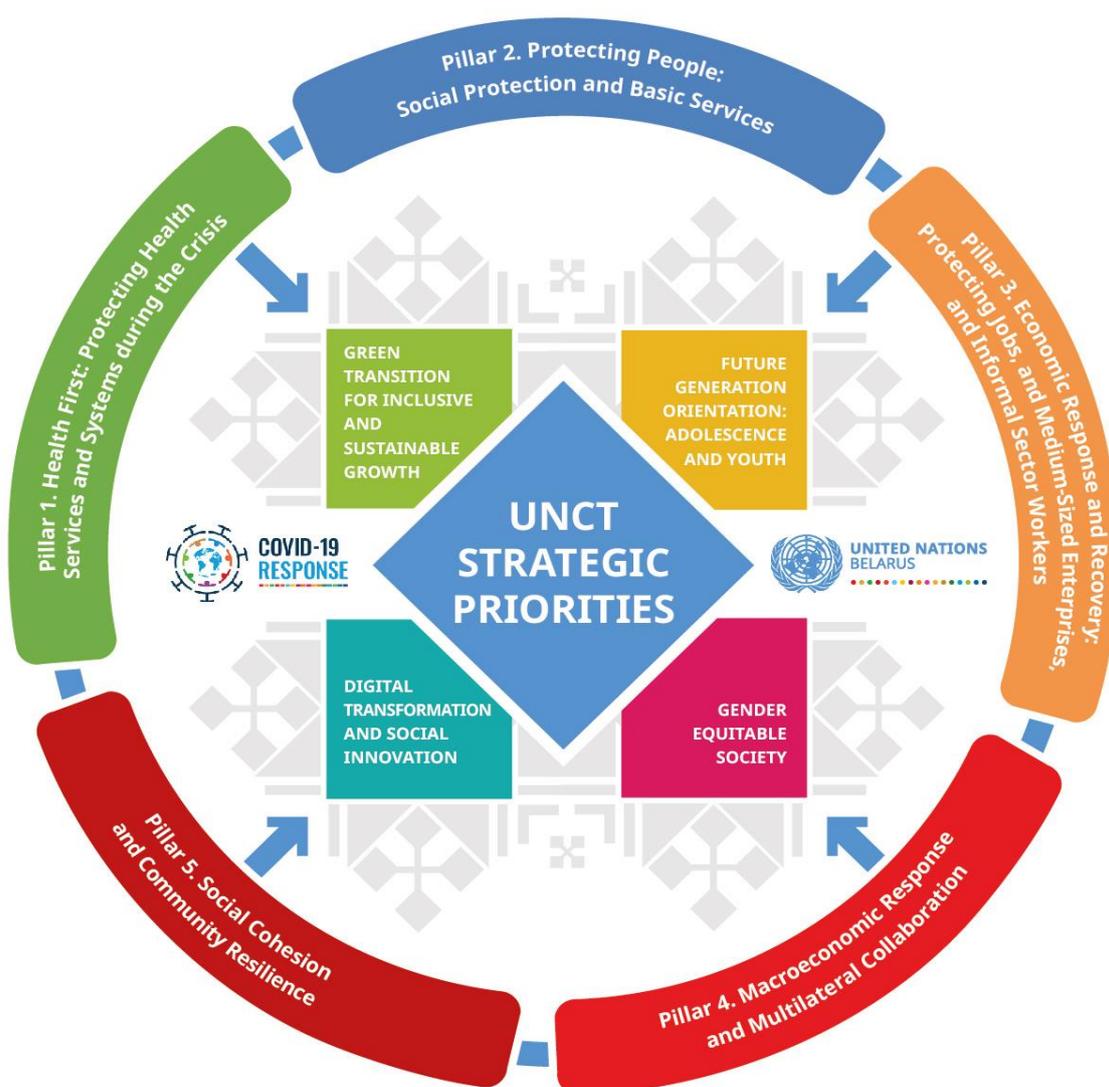
The report is guided by the UN Secretary-General's "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity" report, and the related "UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19"¹. The report is also informed by the Framework's international human rights indicators as well as the principles of gender equality and leave no one behind (LNOB), which are paramount to build back better. It has been drafted under the overall leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and technical lead of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) as chairs of the UNCT's Task Force on Socio-economic response. The report is substantially informed by the input of members of a Task Force and participating IFIs that attended regular meetings. Other Task Forces have also contributed to this response, in particular for Pillar 1, which was informed by the Task Force on Health; and for Pillar 5, which benefited from contributions by the Task Force on Human Rights and Vulnerabilities. The Task Force on Risk Communication also contributed to the dissemination of information on the activities of the UNCT socio-economic response.

As part of its effort to prevent the spread of coronavirus and mitigate its negative impact on all areas of human life, the Government of Belarus has undertaken measures aimed at supporting economic activity and enhancing social protection of people. This document is aligned with immediate government priorities as expressed in its response to the UNCT's offer to support authorities in the long-term recovery of the economy in the wake of the pandemic. While fostering coordinated action to overcome social and economic consequences related to COVID-19, the Government is also interested in the development of a package of measures to respond to long-term implications in line with national priorities.

This document summarizes UNCT priorities in the medium and long-term, which are aligned with Belarus' four strategic priorities on sustainable development. It serves as a companion to the upcoming UNSDCF 2021-2025. It showcases the UNCT's value proposition, covering deliverables that include data monitoring and evaluation, financing of equipment and medical supplies, other in-kind assistance, capacity building, financial products and training, amongst other types of

¹ <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>

intervention. The document is divided in three parts. Section I addresses short-term social and economic challenges and describes immediate government priorities. Section II addresses the longer-term COVID-19 implications in line with UNCT strategic priorities of ensuring a sustainable green and inclusive transition and a digital future that is bolstered by social innovation. Section III showcases specific UNCT interventions along the five areas for UN action as described in the Framework of the socio-economic response and recovery (i.e. the five pillars). It includes deliverables that are being deployed or repurposed since March 2020 as well as additional tools that may become available upon resource mobilization. Annex 1 contains a table that summarizes UNCT interventions. The list highlights activities that have been costed by agencies and will be regularly updated. As of July 2020, about 14 million USD had been identified by agencies as needed for the response with secured funding. However, when considering the medium to longer-term funding gaps, over 50 million USD will still need to be mobilized to build-back better. Annex 2 includes a list of policy decisions undertaken by the national government that this response Plan will complement².



² This document was finalized in July 2020 and it is based on information regarding the epidemiological situation in Belarus and Government measures undertaken at that time. The document may be revised in 2021 to account for new COVID-19 related developments and priorities.

PART I:

Priority Response Areas in the Short-Term: Addressing Immediate Social and Economic Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic represents an extraordinary economic challenge for Belarus. Belarus is a small open economy. In recent years, its trade openness -measured as exports and imports share in GDP- was above one hundred per cent, and exports constituted over half of GDP³. That means that any economic slowdown in the major Belarusian trade partners can severely deepen the impact of recessions. Furthermore, the self-isolation of consumers and physical distancing has quickly translated into an economic shock in itself, regardless of any measures that could be implemented by the authorities.

With regards to its social consequences, the COVID epidemic poses a risk not only to the directly affected victims and their families, but also to the wider population through reduced accessibility to health services (e.g. for patients with chronic illnesses like cardiovascular or cancer)⁴. Concerning education, there is a risk of increased inequalities due to the digital divide, and also a high risk that the high degree of equality between the rich and the poor may be negatively affected because not all Belarusian families can equally afford internet access and relevant equipment. With regard to gender disparities, women are likely to suffer uneven impact, as healthcare and social care workers are playing a disproportionate role in responding to COVID-19 (85 per cent of workers in the health and social sector in Belarus are women) and, as such, they are more likely to be exposed to the virus. The resulting drain on resources may as well impact on the delivery of certain gender sensitive services (e.g. maternal health, pediatric services, sexual and reproductive health).⁵ Furthermore, in Belarus, women spend on average two times more compared to men on household

³ <https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/realny-ktor-ekonomiki/vneshnyaya-torgovlya/>

⁴ <https://eng.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-belarus-is-making-no-show-of-coronavirus-fight-129338-2020/> (accessed 2 April 2020)

⁵ From 2015 to 2017 it can be estimated that state-owned enterprises laid off about 200 000 workers. Other employees have seen their real incomes decline over the crisis. https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_bulletin/index_7046/?sphrase_id=726255 ; https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/publications/izdania/public_bulletin/index_8603/?sphrase_id=726255 (accessed 2 April 2020)

work. When health systems are overloaded and schools closed, a greater burden is placed on domestic care and that burden lands largely on women.

In addition to these costs that affect society in general, recent history shows that certain groups in Belarus are also likely to suffer disproportionately of COVID-19 related social impacts. These groups largely coincide with the different vulnerable groups identified by the Common Country Analysis that informs the upcoming UNSDCF 2021-2025. They include:

- ⦿ *The Unemployed (especially youth unemployed)*. According to monitoring by the Federation of Trade Unions, more than 15,000 employees were on a leave of absence as of April 2020, another 11,000 worked part-time, and around 20,000 people were on an unpaid or partially paid leave, even if there have been no large-scale layoffs in organizations that have trade unions⁶. According to surveys of micro- and small enterprises – at least 78 thousand people are under risk of losing a job and these numbers do not take into account medium enterprises and SOEs.⁷ New survey data suggests that employment in large manufacturing enterprises is also affected⁸.
- ⦿ *Self-employed*. Most of them are bound to lose at least part of their incomes, and they also have limited access to social assistance. In addition, around 36 thousand of self-employed (including those registered as individual entrepreneurs) since the onset of the epidemic are under risk of closure.
- ⦿ *Informal workers*. According to the National Statistical Committee's (*Belstat*) labor force survey (LFS), 8.2 per cent of employed⁹ were employed informally in 2019. These households' sources of income are very volatile and sensitive to recession and travel restrictions.
- ⦿ *Migrant workers*. Belarusian migrant workers are unprotected, especially the seasonal ones who are right now unlikely to travel to their workplace due to travel restrictions. After neighboring countries tightened up their anti-COVID-19 border crossing control measures, needs increased for persons who were stranded in Belarus.
- ⦿ *Refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons*. At the end of May, there were about 9,500 refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people in Belarus. In addition to direct assistance, which is provided and coordinated by UNHCR, for those involved in the health sector and in case of job loss or threat of unemployment, it is important to provide them with information on COVID-19 and on how to access the healthcare system and which organizations to contact for assistance.
- ⦿ *Small city dwellers*. Research on the previous crisis impact shows that the most immediate vulnerable groups were concentrated in small cities¹⁰.

⁶ <https://eng.belta.by/society/view/belarus-trade-unions-allocate-br3m-to-support-workers-in-april-129866-2020/> (accessed 16 April 2020)

⁷ http://www.beroc.by/webroot/delivery/files/PP_SME_Support.pdf

⁸ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iMJJoNiyMy4sYwy5bfeQQ6q2BnT9i9Sp/view>

⁹ around 385 thousand people, of them 312 thousand in rural areas.

¹⁰ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/465121568118662575/Poverty-Vulnerability-and-Household-Coping-Strategies-during-the-2015-16-Recession-in-Belarus> (accessed 2 April 2020)

- ⊙ *Families with children, especially multi-child and single-parent.* In the last recession almost one third of multi-child families suffered income poverty¹¹. Single-parent households are also vulnerable, and most of them are headed by women. Several dominantly female-employing sectors like services or textiles are going to be affected in the crisis, which might have a particularly serious impact on single parent families.
- ⊙ *Children in institutional care and children with disabilities.* These groups are highly vulnerable to being adversely affected by COVID-19. The pandemic limits the capacity of residential institutions to provide safe, nurturing, and appropriate care, and may reduce the availability of and access to a nutritious diet.

Government priorities

Belarus has not applied highly stringent measures with regards to COVID-19. Since the first weeks of the outbreak (the first case was reported on 28 February), there was no lockdown or nationwide quarantine, movement within the country was not restricted, and classes in schools and universities continued, although some schedule changes were introduced to reduce traffic load in the rush hours¹². Macroeconomic constraints may have guided overall policy, as the economy faces significant challenges that will reduce growth during 2020. Still, with the evolution of the epidemic situation, some economic and social measures were undertaken to mitigate the impact of COVID (see Annex II).

In addition, the authorities have signaled potential avenues of cooperation between UNCT and line ministries to respond to long-term consequences of COVID-19¹³. Amongst key priorities for UNCT involvement are the following four Government immediate targets:

- 1) *Procurement of health products:* The procurement of medical products and personal protective equipment for medical units of penitentiary system and ministerial health institutions (as defined by the Ministry of Internal Affairs).
- 2) *Strengthening health services:* Assistance in purchasing medical products and pharmaceuticals funded by the World Bank loan ('Emergency Response to COVID-19 in the Republic of Belarus' project) under the Loan Agreement between the Republic of Belarus and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; which will be implemented by the Ministry of Health. In particular, the Government has determined the following areas for intervention:
 - Organizing emergency medical care and elective specialized medical care for patients in the wake of COVID-19;

¹¹ <http://www.research.by/webroot/delivery/files/poverty2017.pdf> (accessed 2 April 2020)

¹² However, since April 2020, after the authorities of Vitebsk region witnessed a worsening epidemiological situation, they undertook more restrictive measures. Enterprises should not allow employees with signs of respiratory infections to work; and meetings in enterprises are recommended through audio and video conferencing. College and university teaching switched to remote study and most mass events were cancelled. It was also advised to limit travel.

¹³ As defined in the Annex to the Letter of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the UN Resident Coordinator, Minsk, 8 June 2020

- Organizing telemedicine consultations (technical, legal, ethical and special support, training specialists) to address medical problems arising during the pandemic;
- Designing and organizing trainings for medical workers on ethics, human rights and psychological stability related to specific scientific biomedical issues;
- Participation of medical specialists in educational webinars to exchange experience in preventing spread of COVID-19.

The Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Medical Technologies, Informatization, and Healthcare Economy is an implementing organization for the project on “Emergency response to COVID-19 in the Republic of Belarus”. As part of the services rendered under the project, the Centre and the UN agencies (UNICEF and UNDP) signed agreements for supply of medical products and personal protective equipment in accordance with the procurement plan, for the total amount of 16,790,258.46 US dollars (the agreement with UNICEF of 31 December 2020 for the amount of 2,260,985.31 US dollars and the agreement with UNDP of 19 January 2021 for the amount of 14,529,273.15 US dollars). The procurement plan includes 54 items of medical products and personal protective equipment.

- 3) *Enhancing social assistance*: Under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Government is eager to engage with the UNCT for the mobilization of the World Bank and other funding to implement measures aimed at strengthening social safety nets under Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus of May 28, 2020 No. 178 ‘On Temporary Measures of State Support to Employers and Certain Categories of Citizens’. Measures envisaged by Decree No. 178, which has a goal to keep income of more than 100 thousand people at the minimum social guarantee level¹⁴, would include:
 - Supporting employees who partially lost their income due to part-time work;
 - Simplified provision of state targeted social assistance.
- 4) *Smoothing the COVID-19 related impact on SMEs*. Under the coordination of the Ministry of Economy, the UNCT engagement is sought to provide financial, technical assistance and other support to improve the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises during the COVID crisis, including by means of direct funding.

Part III of this document elaborates on the UNCT planned response to these government priorities, which respectively will be addressed by specific interventions as follows: on procurement and on health services through pillars 1, 2 and 3; on social assistance through pillar 2; and on strengthening SME development through interventions within pillars 3, 4 and 5.

¹⁴ According to the Decree, companies are entitled to subsidies from the state off-budget social protection fund of the Republic of Belarus to make extra payments to employees who are not working from May 1 to July 31, 2020 due to idle time which is no fault of their own, and to employees who work part-time during this period due to their employer’s decision up to the level of minimum wage, as well as to pay compulsory insurance contributions to the social protection fund, calculated by the amount of the extra payments to employees. In addition, the Decree also extended the period of providing state targeted social assistance in the form of monthly social benefits to every household member (citizen) to August 31, 2020 to those people whose allowance period expired in May-July of 2020.

PART II:

Priority Response Areas in the Medium to Long-Term: Building Back Better through a Greener and Inclusive Economy and Digital Transformation

Across the world, the pandemic and its associated economic shocks have also created opportunities for structural transformation in the medium to long-term. For instance, improving environmental and social performance through green growth with a focus on infrastructure investment; education and training; digital transformation and social innovation; and clean R&D investment are only some of the areas that have been identified by governments and development partners¹⁵. Whereas in the short-term (i.e. first six months to one year) Belarus' UNCT response will focus on financing immediate social and economic needs, in the medium and longer terms the menu of interventions is broader.

Green transition

The environmental ambition of the EU's Green Deal¹⁶ will not be achieved by European countries and their neighbors acting alone. The drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss are global and are not limited by national borders. The EU can use its influence, expertise and financial resources to mobilize its neighbors and partners to join it on a sustainable path, which has opened up an opportunity for cooperation for Belarus.¹⁷

Bolstering the circular economy

COVID-19 is a game changer that will likely lead to a boost of the green economy worldwide, however; at present, the so-called circular economy is at an early phase of development in Belarus and several structural barriers need to be addressed to unleash its potential. The introduction of

¹⁵ <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-02.pdf>

¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

¹⁷ The EU will continue to lead international efforts and wants to build alliances. It will strategically position itself to either support already existing endeavors of the neighborhood countries or initiate new one to expand EU GD principles and targets and actions. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0640&from=EN> (accessed 20 July 2020)

circular innovations and new technologies will require not just substantial amount of funding, but coping with learning curves, information gaps and successful role models that are hardly possible to setup in the short-term perspective. For instance, according to recent studies, only about 20 per cent of Belarusian producers do not see any obstacles for circular business model. The lack of technologies is highlighted as the most significant barrier for the circular economy (33.5 per cent). Incentives are also needed, as a significant share of producers (around 28.7 per cent) do not see any economic advantage in becoming circular due to high costs of transformation¹⁸.

In the longer term, the dissolution of traditional supply chains should create some incentives to strengthen the circular economy. Belarus having an advanced IT sector is well-suited to implement a holistic recovery strategy, which will boost circularity. Such an approach could be successfully implemented through big initiatives like the Great Stone Park. At the same time, the Government needs to ensure that public investment is used wisely not to simply recreate the old economy, but to build a new, circular and green economy in line with SDGs and NSSD-2035. Whereas fiscal stimulus may not be feasible in the short term, given macroeconomic constraints, private flows will play an increasing role in the national economy. However, a sudden increase of FDI is unlikely in the current context since, according to UNCTAD forecasts, it is expected that global FDI will drop by 30-40 per cent in 2020-2021 due to COVID-19. A focus on mixed approaches, including through Public-Private Partnerships, may be an alternative if it is accompanied by the promotion of regional development through private sector/SMEs.

Fostering low-carbon industries and energy efficiency

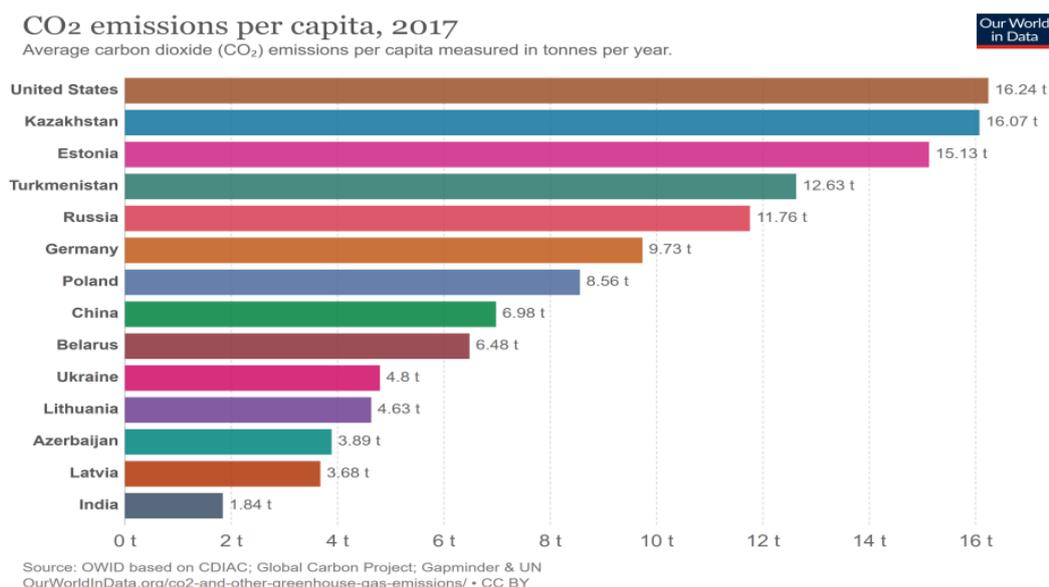
Worldwide, the carbon-intensive sector appeared to be among the most sensitive to the consequences of COVID-19. According to a recent report by IEA¹⁹, annual global oil demand will drop in 2020 by 9 per cent; the gas and coal sectors will face 5 and 8 per cent decline in global demand by the end of 2020. Luckily, Belarus is not amongst the most polluting countries in the world and in 2017, the CO₂ emission rate equaled to 6.48 tons per capita (Figure 1). The upcoming implementation of the regulation mechanisms in the EU in 2021 will likely provide additional barriers for carbon-intensive exporters and make the procedure of entering EU market more costly or even unprofitable for regional competitors. On the one hand, the decarbonization requires significant amount of funding that is a serious challenge for the Belarusian exporters focusing on the EU market, as new EU regulations will foster the implementation of less carbon-intensive technologies in the production cycle (e.g. in the automotive manufacturing sector). On the other hand, in the longer-term these policy developments open-up new opportunities for the Belarusian producers to enter European markets if they become able to absorb and adapt low-carbon technologies.

¹⁸ http://www.beroc.by/webroot/delivery/files/PP_9_BAR_JeRY_final.pdf;

http://www.beroc.by/webroot/delivery/files/PP_10_Agriculture.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.iea.org/reports/oil-market-report-april-2020>

Figure 1. CO2 emissions per capita, 2017



One drawback of the COVID-induced collapse of prices for traditional energy sources is that it makes investments in energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy less attractive. In the current context, economic incentives for private uptake in usage of renewables and energy efficiency in the industrial sector is almost negligible. In Belarus, it remains a luxury and a very costly product that might interest just niche of businesses with high rate of social and ecological responsibility. It also requires a substantial amount of investments that is unlikely at least in the short-term period.

However, recent developments with regards to nuclear energy may open-up a path for lower carbon emissions in the long term. In July 2020, Belarus launched the Unit 1 reactor of its nuclear power plant in Astrovets (BNPP). The unit 2 reactor is expected to be launched in 2021. It is expected that a significant energy surplus may result, creating incentives for new energy uses within the country. One of the potential ways could be the transformation of existing thermal power plants (TPP) and water-power plants (WPP) and their switch from usage of gas towards electricity. At the same time, oversupply of electricity in the internal market opens possibilities for various sharing businesses (e.g. sharing of electric cars, motorcycles and bikes). So far, Belarus's electrical vehicle and electric public sector infrastructure is under-developed. Investing in this area is costly, but successful planning could provide benefits for the development of green economy. Notably, the recent presidential edict No92²⁰ has provided a number of benefits for the owners of the electric cars and could be complemented with business facilitation measures for the industry. The widespread use of electrical transportation will have a positive impact on the volume of emissions in the country.

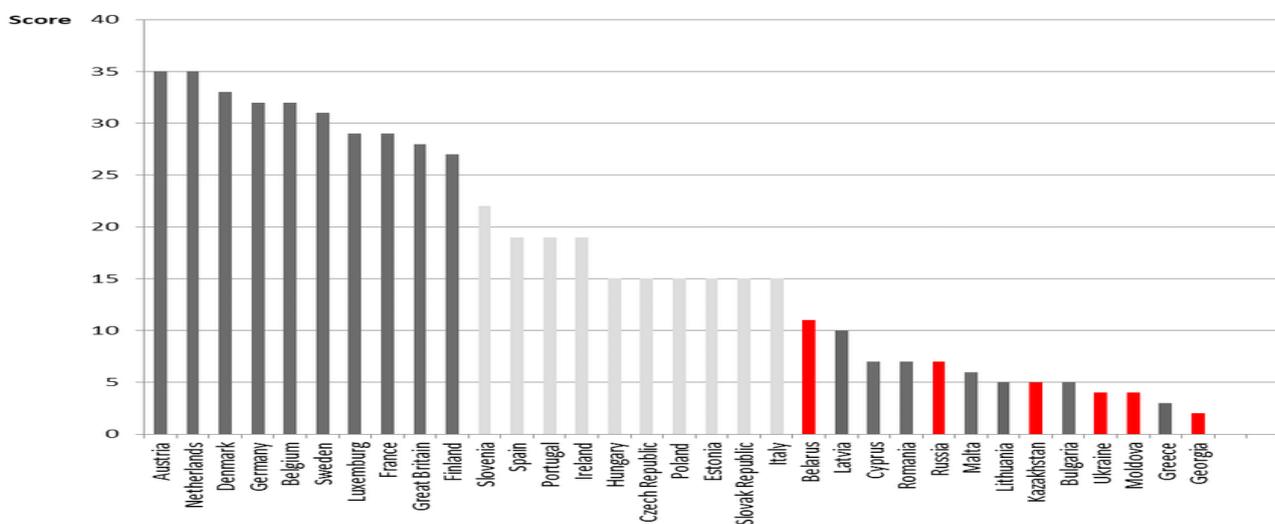
²⁰ Incentives include VAT exemption for the electric cars imported for the personal usage, exemption of parking fees till 2026. At the same time the producers and operators of the electric charging stations are provided the VAT exemption in case of their internal usage. See <http://president.gov.by/uploads/documents/2020/92uk.pdf>

Sound waste-management

On the one hand, COVID-19 pandemic decreased the volume of air pollution through reduced carbon and nitrogen emissions. On the other hand, the level of plastic waste pollution has increased – mostly due to much more intensive usage of single-use masks, gloves and sanitizers. In this regard, the increase in single-use and healthcare system plastic waste becomes a serious challenge for the countries and their municipal solid waste management systems (MSWM).

The performance of Belarus' MSWM is comparable to certain EU countries (Figure 2)²¹. The most severe problems of Belarus' MSWM are the following: insufficient legislation with respect to ban of the landfilling; unregulated biodegradable waste; lack of economic stimuli directed at reduction of waste generation and acceleration of recycling; high costs of recycling; poor quality of waste sorting. These drawbacks negatively affect the environment, contribute to inefficiency of the overall MSWM and non-optimal usage of materials and energy. Bolstering the MSWM will depend fully on substantial amount of funding from public authorities.

Figure 2. Comparative performance of the municipal solid waste management system in European countries



Agro- and ecotourism

Before the pandemic, agro-tourism in Belarus was relatively more popular among foreigners who wanted to explore the Belarusian culture and nature. But Covid-19 brought substantial limitations to vacation and travel plan, and so far, it looks like domestic directions of tourism will be the safest option in 2020. For the sector to remain viable, a certain share of Belarusians would have to get acquainted with the local destinations, and this would become a significant nudge for domestic tourism in forthcoming years. With proper promotion and support, it looks possible that the sector of agro- and ecotourism will be able rebound to levels seen before COVID-19 and economic crisis much faster than the tourism sector in general. At the same time Belarus' agro-tourism sector still

²¹ <https://digital.detritusjournal.com/articles/waste-management-in-post-soviet-countries-how-far-from-the-eu/116>

has certain weaknesses that need to be addressed²²: homogeneity of services; overpricing; inefficient marketing and low level of promotion; lack of business experience; underdeveloped infrastructure (for disabled people in particular). Addressing those challenges would strengthen the sector's ability to withhold domestic tourists and increase its potential.

Digital transformation

Skills development for a digital economy and service provision

The COVID-19 pandemic will provide substantial changes in the labor market and will require additional skills for workers to be able to adapt to the forthcoming changes. Research evidence shows that the lack of qualified labor force keeps being among one of the serious internal barriers that Belarus' business is facing.²³ Unlike job losses in services, job losses in manufacturing might persist even when the crisis is over, and retraining would be necessary to address the problem. In this regard the retraining of the personnel becomes of the highest importance.

Skills development training for the digital economy can smooth labor market shocks and make the released workers more competitive in the market. According to the recent survey results conducted by IZA in Belgium²⁴ around 85 per cent of employees assess telework as becoming inevitable in the near future. Education thus becomes the key factor that determines whether the any given job can be teleworked.²⁵ Belarus, with its relatively high level of human capital, could find a place in the world teleworking economy, but the digital skills of the population are lagging²⁶. Amendments to the Labor Code adopted in February 2020 provide certain opportunities to upgrade skills in the labor force.²⁷ In particular, such amendment opens up the possibility of teleworking in Belarus, which is expected to be among the most influential trends of the forthcoming future in the labor market after the COVID-19 shock forced businesses to go online and allow their employees working from home. Thus, according to a study by UNICEF and the World Bank, in October 2020, 24 per cent of parents switched to remote work from home, and among those who did not switch, more than a half (53 per cent) would like to work from home.

Another serious gap in terms of digitalization relates to situation in the private sector, especially SMEs. The COVID-19 pandemic forced businesses to go online globally and the lack of readiness for changes is a severe barrier that will negatively impact on the competitiveness of SME sector of Belarus. According to a recent report on the level of digitalization of Belarus SME sector, just 22 per cent of Belarusian SMEs are using CRM and ERP systems for the automation of accounting and personnel records in their day-to-day activities. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will also be fundamental.

²²<https://rep.polessu.by/bitstream/123456789/14396/3/HRECHYSHKINA%20O.O.%20%2C%20SIDARAVA%20Z.A.%20SOBENNOSTI%20RAZVITIA%20AGROEKOTURIZMA%20V%20RESPUBLIKE%20BELARUS%27%27.pdf>

²³ http://www.beroc.by/webroot/delivery/files/PP56_Ru.pdf; http://www.beroc.by/publications/working_papers/wp63/

²⁴ <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/13229/the-covid-19-crisis-and-telework-a-research-survey-on-experiences-expectations-and-hopes>

²⁵ According to the PEW research survey around 62% of respondents with bachelor degree or higher are able to conduct their work remotely. See https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/05/06/telework-may-save-u-s-jobs-in-covid-19-downturn-especially-among-college-graduates/ft_2020-05-06_telework_02/

²⁶ <https://voxeu.org/article/covid-hysteresis-and-future-work>

²⁷ Remote work was legalized in Belarus and this measure substantially broadens the employment possibilities, especially for those living in the small towns and rural areas. These measures are extremely vital for people living in less developed regions of Belarus, where the economic situation is more compelling than in Minsk district and Minsk region. For instance, Mogilev, Gomel and Brest regions show higher than average poverty rates. According to the official statistics in 2018, respectively 35.7, 29.1 and 25.7 per cent of its' inhabitants lived below the moderate poverty line. See http://www.beroc.by/publications/policy_papers/pp68/

Companies that have been already implementing AI and scaling its' usage are reporting times growth of their rates of return to investment. Around 66 per cent of executives in foreign companies are planning to deploy AI during the next year in order to boost revenues by at least 30 per cent, while just 3.4 per cent of Belarusian SMEs are planning to do the same²⁸. This substantial gap in the level of digitalization of Belarusian SMEs affects its level of productivity, flexibility and adaptive capacity to external shocks.

Digitalization is also increasingly linked to access to public services in labor markets and health. The expansion of digital skills could enable greater flexibility in working opportunities as well as increased accessibility to services through e-counselling. Development of digitalizing services such as e-health counseling or other outreach services requires capacity building of professionals and communities to be able to use new platforms and digital tools to effectively deliver such services. Long term, these opportunities will establish more inclusive environments, enabling vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities to be better integrated into community initiatives.

Government procurement for IT-services and products

The pandemic has opened-up opportunities for potential cooperation between Government and the IT-sector²⁹. The recession in the IT-industry will increase interest amongst firms in finding new business partners. The model of potential cooperation could be in a form of so-called "testbeds"³⁰ and might lead to the growth of public-private partnership (PPP) in the economy. Public-private partnerships in form of testbeds cooperation might lead to both faster digitalization of the public services and to the development of product IT-companies in Belarus. One of the perspective directions for cooperation between Belarus' authorities and IT is the field of education, which at present lacks online learning platforms. The demand for e-learning has already boosted globally and the situation is unlikely to go back to pre-COVID-19 times.³¹

Upgrading public E-infrastructure for Government and business

COVID-19 forced governments to go online and start providing information on their websites and social media accounts. The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased the demand for digitalization of available services. The situation raised importance of availability of such services like digital IDs or online application for unemployment and other benefits. In this regard, the crisis opened-up a window for expanded cooperation between Belarus's government and IT-sector that is currently facing a reduced demand on its services and might be more interested to provide socially meaningful service at a reduced cost. Furthermore, COVID-19 has heavily affected the usual

²⁸ http://www.beroc.by/publications/working_papers/wp63/; <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/artificial-intelligence/ai-investments>; <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/artificial-intelligence/roi-artificial-intelligence>

²⁹ The IT sector has faced problems caused by COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time, in April 2020 the number of dismissed from the IT-sector surpassed the number of hires. These numbers are not surprising as the business activity worldwide dropped substantially and resulted in export decline of Belarus' IT-industry that mostly orients on the US and EU markets.

³⁰ Under this model, the government offers full support in R&D for its partners from the IT-sector, provides access to the required data, but leaves the property rights to its IT-partner. On the other hand, the IT-companies are providing access to results of the project to the authorities at a reduced price or free of charge

https://www.compete.org/storage/images/uploads/File/PDF%20Files/AEMC_Part_PPP_Summary_FINAL.pdf

³¹ According to the current report on the development of e-learning, the size of the global online education market will reach almost USD 320 billion in 2025, while in 2019 its size was nearly USD 187.8 billion <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/4986759/global-online-education-market-forecasts-from>

business models and forced businesses and governments to start thinking about the expansion of available e-services.³² The role of online supply services has grown especially in the sectors that suffer the most due to COVID-19: healthcare, food services, recreation, tourism, retail, education, logistics and transport. Creating the conditions for the development of online services can become a significant element for faster economic recovery and greater inclusive communities for different vulnerable populations.

Fostering intellectual transport systems and smart urban and rural settlements

The COVID-19 would change the development path of global intelligent transportation system (ITS) which was expected to grow from USD 1.64 billion in 2018 to USD 8.47 billion by 2026.³³ First, it will boost the development of the autonomous public transport to keep the drivers safe in case of new pandemics. Second, the world will witness an accelerated usage of artificial intelligence (AI) aimed at the growth of operational efficiency and safety as well as the use of digital assistants that keep an eye on measuring various indicators (e.g. the temperature of the passenger). Third, there is a need for lower social contacts through suspension of long-term parking and transformation of fast curbside pickup spaces near restaurants and shops.

At the same time COVID-19 will foster the development of smart cities worldwide. Lockdowns have changed the habits of people and showed the importance of sound planning of urban traffic that would allow for physical distancing and the availability of the open data for decision-making. In March 2020, Belarus announced plans to implement smart city concept in ten localities. Moving forward will require addressing barriers that include high implementing costs in terms funding and availability of advanced technologies; lack of open data, qualified personnel, and strategic vision and understanding of the Smart City goals by the local authorities³⁴.

To sum up, whereas in the short-term (i.e. first six months to one year) Belarus' UNCT response will focus on financing immediate social and economic needs, in the medium and longer terms the menu of interventions is broader. In the context of medium to long term horizons, several interventions by UNCT are thus possible that could broaden the impact of policy response. In line with the strategic priorities of the upcoming UNSDCF (2021-2025), the focus of the UNCT will be on improving the country's resilience. Accordingly, interventions by agencies will also seek to build back better by deploying activities that cover a sustainable green transition, digitalization and social innovation (see Part II, pillars 3, 4 and 5). The UNCT, under the leadership of the RC and the technical lead of UNDP as well as the work of other agencies will shift the emphasis of the UN's socio-economic response to put a strong focus on helping Belarusian decision makers and other stakeholders look beyond recovery, towards 2030, making choices and managing complexity and uncertainty in the areas of green transition and digital transformation along the lines of the UN Socio-Economic Framework five pillars.

³² https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/services_report_e.pdf

³³ <https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/intelligent-transportation-system-market-102065>

³⁴ https://json.tv/ict_telecom_analytics_view/osnovnye-tendentsii-i-perspektivy-razvitiya-rynka-smart-city-20200115041201

PART III:

The Five pillars of UNCT Belarus intervention

Pillar 1. Health First: Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis³⁵

Pillar 1 of the *UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19* addresses specifically the need to prioritize health, with a focus on protecting health services and systems during the crisis and beyond. The UNCT has prioritized support to maintain essential health services (e.g. immunization, maternal health, HIV/TB prevention and treatment, distant counseling) in Belarus as well as support to health systems recovery, preparedness and strengthening in public institutions (e.g. residences for the elderly, prisons and detention facilities), by mobilizing its entire technical and operational strength at global, regional and country levels to contain the paralysis that resulted from the COVID-19 outbreak. Specific areas of response to assist national authorities in maintaining essential health services and systems include:

1) *Providing analytical and policy support, and rapid technical guidance:* In Belarus, the UNCT, under the leadership of WHO, has engaged with national authorities and key partners to develop a country-specific operational plan with estimated resource requirements for COVID-19 preparedness and response, and adapted, where available, an existing Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan. The UNCT was involved in the development of a Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP); which enhanced Belarus presence on the COVID-19 Partners Platform. WHO supported the National authorities in defining the critical areas of response preparedness and required resource cost analysis. Following the invitation of the Minister of Health of Belarus, WHO implemented a technical support mission on COVID-19 preparedness assessment in Belarus (8-11 April 2020). Recommendations were made based on findings from the review of normative and technical documents from the Government, site visits and meetings, which were presented during joint press conference of the WHO experts and the Minister of Health. The Mission technical

³⁵ NOTE: This pillar is substantially informed by Belarus' Public Health Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP), pillars 1 and 8

report has been subsequently delivered to the Ministry of Health. Further work will involve the complex multifaceted assistance to the Government in the framework of the national version of the COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) to outline the public health measures that need to be taken to support Belarus to prepare for and respond to COVID. **UNDP**, under its global COVID-19 Integrated Response, mobilized funds under its Rapid Response Facility (RRF) focusing on socio-economic impact, health system support, and crisis management and response. **UNICEF**, under its Country Response Plan has repurposed its own resources and mobilized new to provide line ministries with critical PPE supplies, enhance frontline workers' capacities and psycho-social support, support families and children in issues of psycho-social distress and cybersecurity issues, and advance information campaigns on infection prevention and control messaging. A dedicated procurement team was set up and working within the country office in close coordination and with support from the Supply Division in Copenhagen. **UN-Habitat** will provide technical assistance in providing spatial evidences for strategic interventions by mapping critical hotspots in need of improvements (e.g. areas at higher risk of the spread of covid-19, areas lacking health services built upon spatial accessibility analysis to health facilities, etc.). Moreover, Building on the strength of the #BeyondTheOutbreak virtual live learning series for mayors and local leaders organized with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Metropolis, UN-Habitat will provide an online city-to-city virtual learning platform to share innovative and appropriate solutions to ensure that cities are better prepared for the future.

2) Programme implementation and technical support: Activities by the UNCT have so far included the *mapping of available resources and supply systems in health and other sectors*; conducting in-country inventory review of supplies based on WHO's a) Disease Commodity Package (DCP) and b) COVID-19 patient kit, and developing a central stock reserve for COVID-19 case management. In this regard, the **World Bank** provided a \$90 million USD worth loan for the Belarus Emergency COVID-19 Response Project. The Loan Agreement between the World Bank and Belarus was signed on June 1, 2020. WHO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, identified resources and supplies required for COVID response. A COVID-19 Supply portal at WHO was made operational in Belarus and a Supply coordinator was appointed. Looking forward, the WHO will continue its ongoing review and inventory of necessary expected supply needs. In the framework of the European Union funded project "Solidarity for Health Initiative", as part of EU neighborhood partnership project EU DG NEAR, the delivery of 3.6 million pieces of personal protective equipment funded by the European Union in the amount of almost 3 million Euros and procured by WHO has been implemented on the 22nd of June 2020. Additional essential activities to support country response to COVID-19 will be funded by this project in 2020-2021.

Furthermore, **UNDP**, **UNICEF**, **UNFPA** with coordination by the office of the Resident Coordinator (**RCO**) and **WHO** have worked on *reviewing supply chains control and management systems*. Work included reviewing stockpiling, storage, security, transportation and distribution arrangements for medical and other essential supplies, including COVID-19 DCP and patient kit reserve in-country. In addition, **UNDP**, **UNICEF**, **UNFPA** will work on preparations for medical procurement through the World Bank loan. **UNDP** will use its Rapid Response Facility to provide needed capacity to the

Ministry of Health for managing and consolidating health procurement with the deployment of UNDP Global Health Procurement Centre (GHPC). **UNICEF** has worked on procurement for the Government for the following items: gloves, pyrometers, PPE (suits, shoe covers, masks), antiseptic, oxygen concentrators, laboratory reagents, and in collaboration with UNDP and UNFPA, will support further the Ministry of Health in procurement on PPE and medicines defined under a World Bank loan. **IOM** also supported an uninterrupted provision of border and customs control services at the points of entry (PoEs) focusing on procurement of PPEs, wireless medical thermometers for the State Border and Customs Committees and Ministry of Internal Affairs as well as NGO partners working with migrants in detention facilities, including the Red Cross regional branches, vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking in human beings. **UNHCR** used its own sources of annual budget to purchase PPE for personnel of partner organizations and persons of concerns (which were distributed with the help of NGO partners).

With regards to *reviewing procurement processes* (including importation and customs) for medical and other essential supplies, and encouraging local sourcing to ensure sustainability, a number of agencies have repurposed funding to provide support. These include **UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA** with **RCO** and **WHO** coordination, which will work on preparing lists of medical items for the COVID response. **IAEA** has worked on procurement of RT-PCR (Real-Time Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction) equipment, relevant personal protection equipment, diagnostic reagents and laboratory consumables for the Republican Center for Emergency Medical Care. **UNAIDS** has repurposed funds for the procurement of COVID-19 tests. **UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF** have reprogrammed funds within the Belmed project, mobilized funding for the procurement of medical supplies and PPE for the Red Cross and plans to scale up these efforts to maintain and advance the health of vulnerable groups and health care system; funds from projects on Border Management, Wind Power Development and on Preparing the 7th UNFCCC have been reprogrammed to procure PPE for the benefit of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and the State Border Committee as well as procurement of PPE and cannulas for the health institutions as per request from the Ministry of Health completed using the reprogrammed funds of SDG and WTO projects³⁶.

Work will be undertaken by UNCT to *identify and support critical functions* that must continue during a widespread outbreak of COVID-19 (e.g. water and sanitation; fuel and energy; food; telecommunications/internet; finance; law and order; education; and transportation), including necessary resources and essential workforce. **UNICEF** will focus on capacitating the education system in meeting emerging needs of children and their families in light of the ongoing situation with COVID-19³⁷. It will also work to address the immediate needs of most vulnerable child groups such as children in residential care or closed-type institutions, through procurement and supply of personal protective items, critical hygiene supplies; and provision of WASH services (hygiene promotion campaigns and small-scale rehabilitation of hand-washing facilities). In addition,

³⁶ Requests for procurement from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection the National SDG Coordinator were received and are being addressed.

³⁷ The activity will include a video reel about the phenomenon of COVID-19 and its possible implications; capacity building for parents and teachers on COVID-19 and building resilience to it; instruction for teachers on how to work online and recommendations for the development of distant learning system).

UNICEF will support early intervention centers for remote counseling and services for children from 0 to 3 years old with delays in development for ensuring the provision of uninterrupted assistance to this category of children amid the coronavirus pandemic. Finally, **UNDP**, as part of its Eco-monitoring project, will deliver 18 personal computers (PCs) and laptops for 18 pilot sites based on “green schools” that are being procured to enforce conditions for digital work for the pilots.³⁸ The project also reprogrammed funds for procuring and delivering PPE and communication materials to educational institutions.

3) Support on tracking and reaching vulnerable populations: The UNCT has *conducted initial capacity and risk analysis, including mapping of vulnerable populations*. **OHCHR** provided initial analysis and recommendations, in the form of a guidance note, on the human rights consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak. **UNAIDS** prepared a Rapid needs assessment, which was run among PLHIV and NGOs providing HIV prevention services to reveal potential gaps, medicines and supplies stock-outs. Based on the results, funding was provided to NGO People plus to cover most urgent needs. **UNFPA** provided assistance to the Belarus Red Cross to establish and manage volunteers (13 volunteers across the country were hired) and community work to provide support and counselling to elderly people throughout the country. It also partnered with IT companies “Soft Teco” to provide an application to manage volunteers and community support and Oyper to help the Belarussian Red Cross to create a system for collecting donations to support services for older persons and provide protection for volunteers and social workers who are supporting older single people in self-isolation.

UNHCR repurposed funds to produce a leaflet with general information on COVID-19 and relevant recommended preventive measures, contact information for persons of concern (PoCs) to UNHCR, both UNHCR and partner organization and institutions which PoCs can approach in case of emerging symptoms of coronavirus.³⁹ With the help of partner organizations UNHCR also undertook monitoring of the situation of PoCs targeting those who lost their jobs and may become unemployed in order for UNHCR to be able to provide them with support, including financial assistance. While Belarusian borders remained open, **IOM** mobilized resources to provide immediate and longer-term direct support to vulnerable returned labor and stranded migrants, including assistance with voluntary return to countries of citizenship, medical, psychological and legal assistance as well as rehabilitation and reintegration support to victims of trafficking. It supported the provision of COVID-19-related consultation services to vulnerable migrants through strengthening capacities of a nationwide hotline on safe migration and travel administered by the NGO partner “Business Women Club”⁴⁰ and rolling-out an information campaign with the State Border Committee on the virus risks and prevention measures, targeting 1,500 foreigners and Belarusians daily at the land and air points of entry (PoEs). **UNICEF** provided regular

³⁸ Through repurposing of \$18,206 (EU Eco-monitoring) for project pilot educational institutions.

³⁹ The leaflet is based on WHO and the Ministry of Health of Belarus (MoH) information / materials on coronavirus and is available in Russian, English, French, Arabic and Dari. It is being shared with PoCs via UNHCR partner organizations (mostly the Belarussian Red Cross Society)

⁴⁰ Through the hotline, the migrants receive comprehensive counseling on country-specific entry/exit/stay procedures, healthcare services, etc. Since March 2020, the number of COVID-19-related queries (both phone and written) makes up appr. 41% of all hotline requests. The agency also contributed to an innovative, systematic and multi-sectoral response. IOM facilitates the stay of most vulnerable migrants in Belarus till flights are resumed under the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme (AVRR). Since the COVID-19 outbreak in Belarus within the AVRR dimension 63 applicants received administrative or/ and humanitarian assistance, 54 of them successfully returned home (as of 31 July 2020).

communication with the administrations of 9 residential care institutions under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection for children, including children with disabilities, monitoring of situation, provision of emergency support and supply of PPEs.

Looking forward, **IOM** will address health needs of returned labor migrants and international truck drivers at risk of exposure to HIV and TB in the context of COVID-19 (i.e. through targeted assistance in delivery of medical supplies and medicine to returned migrants; hotline for health education and hygiene promotion; provision of PPEs; and informational leaflets). The agency is also developing a guidance document for partner NGOs on protecting VoTs during COVID-19. It also plans to identify health needs of returned, transit and labour migrants, monitoring and further referral to relevant health care establishments. **UNAIDS** will provide support to PLHIV community on antiretrovirals (ARVs) home and post-delivery; psychological counselling and legal support; online trainings and IT support (recording of online lessons for PLHIV, procurement of tablets to ensure online access and avoid isolation); HIV-testing for homeless people and condom distribution. **UNFPA** will offer support addressing the COVID-19 prevention among the elderly; strengthening the coordinated system of comprehensive COVID-19 prevention among vulnerable groups. **UNICEF** will continue to support frontline medical professionals with psycho-social support as well as building professional capacities with partners to strengthen the national monitoring system with regards to COVID-19. At the same time, UNICEF will also collaborate with colleagues to build capacities for e-counselling on integrated services such as early childhood intervention responses that are directed to vulnerable children with special education needs or disabilities.

UNDP will promote a partnership to identify and assess high-risk factors for the emergence of zoonotic diseases linked to ecosystem disruptions and biodiversity loss/change as well as address air, water and land contamination - the main cause of chronic diseases to reduce vulnerability of population from COVID 2019 and similar future pandemics. UNDP will also advocate for application of broader “One Health” system approaches with focus on stronger links on environment and health interconnections that address the links between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment and climate.

Considering that stress is a key factor in the appearance and spread of non-communicable diseases, in order to reduce the impact of stress on public health, **UNDP** plans to focus its efforts on creation and development of the system of stress management and prevention by establishing a system of universal accessible psychotherapeutic care for the population (including socially vulnerable groups);⁴¹ Moreover, UNDP is planning to implement measures to reduce the risks of developing NCDs and related critical states among men aged 35+. This target group is the most vulnerable in the situation of COVID-19, since NCDs cause the majority of severe / lethal cases of COVID-19 .The interventions will be aimed at developing and implementing an information

⁴¹ The situation of the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the increasing influence of this factor on the health of the population, which is related to forced self-isolation, lack of awareness of the consequences of the disease, as well as panic in society. organization and conducting of the research on the impact of stress factors on the appearance and progress of the leading NCDs and on the psychological and psychotherapeutic needs of the population (including vulnerable groups); holding information campaigns for the public on developing skills to identify and manage stress among the population. The main UNDP partners in the implementation of the above measures will be the Ministry of Health, as well as NGOs and initiative groups for promoting stress management skills among the population.

campaign, which will help to change stereotypes in the behavior of the target group, promote a healthy lifestyle and nudge people to look after their health condition. The intervention will support the efforts of the private sector and NGOs' initiatives aimed at preventing NCDs among men aged 35+, including corporate level and community level.

UNHCR will deepen ongoing assistance to PoCs (legal advice and liaison with state authorities) to ensure their unhindered access to medical treatment in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. It will also strengthen support, including financial assistance, targeting vulnerable PoCs with the focus on those who lost their jobs and may become unemployed. The UN Refugee Agency is ready to allocate additional funds from its annual budget to provide more direct aid to persons of concern (with the focus on the most vulnerable ones) if the situation requires this. **UNICEF** will provide rapid support in meeting the emerging educational needs of children and their families. Its work will focus on improving the situation in educational institutions, residential care and foster families. It will also undertake Data Collection and Analysis on affected communities **UNODC** will repurpose funds to undertake a study on impact of COVID-19 with regards to New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)/stimulant drugs use in 7 EECA countries, including Belarus, addressing the effect of quarantine and closure of the borders on (a) drug supply; (b) drug and services demand; (c) drug prices. The report will include recommendations on algorithms on how to reach out the people who use drugs and refer them to HIV related services and continuum of care.

As the availability and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine evolve, the UNCT will work together to find the best solutions towards our common objective of delivering vaccination, which will be critical to reduce mortality by ensuring the protection of health-care systems and the safety of the most vulnerable groups, which comprise of citizens of Belarus as well as foreigners and stateless persons, including refugees. Efforts will be made to ensure the initial distribution of the vaccines to all high priority groups within society, particularly those who operate in high to very high-risk environments, such as healthcare and other essential front-line workers; older adults; and individuals with underlying medical conditions. The UN approach to vaccination is based on the values framework for the allocation and prioritization of COVID-19 vaccination⁴² and the Roadmap for Prioritizing Uses of COVID-19 Vaccines⁴³, both developed by WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE). The values framework is intended to offer guidance on the prioritization of groups for vaccination when vaccine supply is limited. It provides a foundation for the objectives of COVID-19 vaccination programmes and links those to target groups for vaccination and could help inform specific national policies. The Roadmap includes recommendations that may be appropriate under different epidemiologic and vaccine supply conditions.

⁴² WHO SAGE values framework for the allocation and prioritization of COVID-19 vaccination, 14 September 2020
https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/334299/WHO-2019-nCoV-SAGE_Framework-Allocation_and_prioritization-2020.1-eng.pdf?ua=1

⁴³ WHO SAGE Roadmap for prioritizing Uses of COVID-19 Vaccines in the Context of Limited Supply (Version 1.1), 13 November 2020
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/immunization/sage/covid/sage-prioritization-roadmap-covid19-vaccines.pdf?Status=Temp&sfvrsn=bf227443_2

Pillar 2. Protecting People: Social Protection and Basic Services

Because the pandemic impacts the world's poorest and most vulnerable hardest, they deserve special attention, including women and girls, and those surviving on income in the informal sector. In past crises, countries with strong social protection systems and basic services suffered the least and recovered the fastest. The UNCT response focuses on the delivery of basic services, social transfers and other forms of social protection. Forms of intervention will include the scale-up cash transfers, food assistance programmes, social insurance programmes and child benefits to support families, among others.

With regards to *scaling up and expanding resilient and pro-poor social protection systems*, **IOM** continues its efforts to protect and provide timely and complex social, psychological, medical and reintegration assistance to victims of human trafficking (VoTs), including through the continued operations of the IOM-run Rehabilitation center for VoTs and remote psychological counselling. It has implemented an information campaign on COVID-19 precautions targeting Belarusians and foreign labour migrants and support services using IOM social media channels and Viber community with 38,000 users. It also provided information on country-specific COVID-19 prevention practices and safety recommendations to returning Belarusian migrants within its Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme. IOM has produced and will disseminate information leaflets for victims of human trafficking on the use of PPEs and COVID-19 safety recommendations. **UNHCR** continues and will continue monitoring of the situation of its persons of concern (refugees, stateless persons) in order for them to have unhindered access to socioeconomic rights and associated services they are entitled to due to their protection and legal status in Belarus. Moreover, the UN Refugee Agency commits to provide direct assistance to individuals falling under UNHCR mandate: starting from free of charge counselling and finishing with direct aid to vulnerable ones, including financial assistance, in order people affected by COVID outbreak are able to support themselves and their families.

FAO will build on its resilience and rural development programme to ensure meeting needs emerging from the direct and indirect effects of COVID-19. The goal is to implement cash transfer programmes with support packages designed to help the most vulnerable small holder rural households to diversify their agricultural production, and at the same time to improve the food security and nutrition of the family. The packages include provision of technical training, extension and advisory services, and production inputs, as well as nutrition education and social follow up and coaching for participant households. It will also intervene to help *maintain essential food and nutrition services* and provide information for evidence-based decision-making on agriculture, food security, food consumption/nutrition, including through monitoring and assessing how the COVID-19 pandemic affects the food and agriculture sector. The analysis will help delineate, by geographic regions, the degrees of country exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. The system will strengthen the capacity of the government to collect data on food consumption and cost of diets, and monitoring food prices and purchasing power of affected population using an internationally

recognized methodology and tools. In addition, it is producing a series of technical and policy briefs presenting a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the pandemic's impacts on livelihoods, food and agriculture, markets as well as on poverty and nutrition. Furthermore, using its Food and Agriculture Policy Decisions Analysis (FAPDA) database and methodology, it is offering an overview of current policy decisions that Member Countries are adopting to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and agricultural systems.

UN-Habitat will raise the awareness of the COVID-19 response among vulnerable groups through participation in planning related activities (e.g. profiling exercise, mapping, etc.) to ensure the community feedback is in place in regard to interventions in urban settings. Moreover, UN-Habitat will advise on safe urban mobility with a focus on deprived areas and advocate for measures to support the most affected in line with one of the major UN-Habitat response areas to tackle COVID-19 "Support local governments and community driven solutions".

With regards to *ensuring continuity and quality of water and sanitation services*, **UNECE** will contribute to raising awareness through organizing an event on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) application with a focus on specific target groups (sectoral ministries) of the SEA, application based on the outcomes of the SEA pilot on its Draft Water Strategy through repurposing of funds. In addition, it will also work towards the finalization of the SEA for the Water Strategy and the Promotion of water sector reform. Ensuring access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services will also be promoted through national targets on water, sanitation and health and the related action plan developed under the **UNECE-WHO** Regional Office for Europe Protocol on Water and Health. The new targets, expected to be officially adopted by the Government of Belarus in summer 2020, are in full alignment with the objectives and principles of the 2030 Agenda such as prevention, safety, risk-based management, equity of access and attention to hygiene. Once the targets and the action plan are officially adopted, UNECE and WHO Regional Office for Europe may engage in providing technical assistance for implementation of selected targets.

Regarding the need to *secure sustained learning for all children, and adolescents, preferably in schools*, **UNICEF** will undertake a joint project to support vulnerable segments of the population (i.e. children, adolescents and their families). The project will partner with the education system to build capacities of schools and professionals in meeting emerging needs of children and their families in light of the ongoing situation with COVID-19.

Concerning the need to *support the continuity of social services and access to shelters*, **UNICEF** has been undertaking a COVID Rapid Online Survey of families with children, which will be used to develop policy simulations for COVID responses supporting vulnerable groups. The policy simulations will be based on Commitment to Equity for Children (CEQ4C) research conducted jointly by UNICEF and the World Bank. UNICEF will also work with government partners to develop, expand, implement, evaluate, and identify financing for social protection programmes, both cash and in-kind. Likewise, partnerships will continue to be developed to enhance psycho-social outreach for children, parents, and professionals working directly with children.

UNDP will put a strong focus on social protection by exploring financial inclusion options with its national and international partners, convening a policy level dialogue on Temporary Basic Income and Universal Basic Income as parts of a renewed social contract as well as the future of work, in particular for the most vulnerable groups. The care economy will be at focus of UNDP's assistance to the Government of Belarus reaching domestic and informal workers, people with disabilities, women, migrants and other groups.

In partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, **UNDP** will deliver a series of interventions to build needed marketable skills for people with disabilities and elderly. The focus will be on digital literacy, social skills to improve prospects of employability, and basic health training. Grant support to local initiatives will be offered to improve the delivery of basic social services in regions of Belarus. To support residential institutions in ensuring optimal nutrition in epidemiological settings, UNICEF has developed Guidelines for ensuring the necessary level of micronutrients for children, including those with disabilities.

UNDP will continue its support to Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) assisting the government in smooth transition to state funding for HIV and tuberculosis response. The plan for ensuring sustainability of the national response and transition to state funding of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis prevention, treatment, care and support programs has been developed with the UNDP's support. The UNDP and the Ministry of Health led CCM has expanded its ranks thanks to including persons in methadone substitution treatment and persons in prison.

In relation to *supporting victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)*, **UNFPA** has conducted a rapid needs' assessment of civil society organizations' (CSOs) and state-run "crisis" rooms, which will provide assistance to survivors of domestic violence. The study is being used to supply the organizations with the required equipment, PPE and disinfection supplies to ensure that the essential services are available to the survivors of domestic violence during the COVID-19 outbreak. UNFPA has also worked with all mobile operators to make the national hotline for the domestic violence victims toll-free to any subscriber's account within A1, Life, MTS networks. A1 covers more than 4.9 million people in the country and is a local branch of Telekom Austria Group. The national hotline for the survivors of domestic violence is operated by the international NGO "Gender Perspectives".

Pillar 3. Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and Informal Sector Workers

The UNCT's interventions under this pillar aim at softening the impact of a recession, which had been forecast before the epidemic, by focusing on its impact on employment and deprivation. The priority has been to protect jobs and livelihoods that prevent a reversal of SDG progress in these areas. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), informal workers, farm workers, the self-employed, youth and people with disabilities, refugees and migrant workers are the target of

specific UNCT interventions, with emphasize the need to redefine social protection systems to guarantee universal coverage of the basic elements associated to decent work. UNCT interventions have also addressed important gender dimensions, since women are overrepresented in some services most impacted by the crisis, mostly lacking social protection and bear a disproportionate burden in house care as well as in social services. Efforts are being made also to ensure the continuing functioning of small producers and SMEs in various activities to avoid disruption and permanent job losses. Finally, an emphasis on environmental dimension has also been included in agency responses with the goal that they support the transition to greener outcomes and bolster a circular economy that is founded on sustainable consumption and production.

With regards to providing *Integrated, country-specific policy advice and programme support*, the UNCT has undertaken work in close cooperation with resident and non-resident agencies, as a result of which a draft analysis of economic impact has been prepared that is regularly updated. the **UNECE** has prepared an Action Framework for Responses to the COVID-19 crisis that includes three main pillars: facilitate connectivity; address transboundary and other risks; support a green and resilient recovery. **FAO** is conducting a price, and policy monitoring and analysis at nation and region levels to support the country to take appropriate policy and planning decisions in support of agricultural market/trade and production decision of stakeholders, including smallholders. FAO is also supporting the agri-food supply chain monitoring to identify the problems in input supply, transformation, sale, technical assistance, financial access, and labor supply and wage during the crisis. It will also strengthen national institutions in agricultural planning. Anticipating the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture is paramount, considering the uncertainties that surround the duration of the phenomenon. Inter-alia, a protracted crisis can affect budget deficits and therefore the ability of the State to provide the necessary short and long-term support that guarantees national food security. **UNCTAD** has monitored the effects of the global pandemic on manufacturing, trade, foreign direct investment and economic growth. It has provided technical assistance that can help countries mitigate or recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19. **UNDP**, through its Rapid Response Facility has mobilized funds to assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Belarusian SMEs for the purpose of developing recommendations for corporate and policy measures to accelerate SMEs recovery and strengthen their resilience. The assessment will inform upcoming five-year state programme on SMEs support.

Looking forward, **FAO** will strengthen national institutions in agricultural planning, bearing in mind the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture may affect fiscal balance and therefore the ability of the State to provide the necessary short and long-term support that guarantees national food security. **UNCTAD** will provide advice to improve Belarus' Competition legal framework through strengthening the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade (MART) for a more effective law enforcement against anti-competitive practices; and through the strengthening of its merger control regime. Training and capacity building activities will be provided to support MART's role in identifying measures most appropriate to address key economic sectors affected by COVID-19. Furthermore, advise could be provided to improve consumer protection policy and law

enforcement, through information exchange mechanisms, increased consumers awareness-raising campaigns and complaint tools, and measures addressing the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers.

With regards to *scaling up employment intensive programming*, ILO will offer a toolkit on COVID response in terms of research, training and analysis⁴⁴. In particular, the interventions can help understanding economic and labor market impact and the informal sector, which can be customized to country needs. The projects could also involve follow up policy advice subject to resource mobilization. UNICEF is also working with government, CSOs, businesses and adolescents and youth themselves to define better education and professional orientation strategies to prepare these youth for effective transition to the labor market. It is recognized among all the stakeholders that the current education system does not provide sufficient transitional skills to prepare young people for the quickly changing labor environment. UNICEF will have a particular focus on partnering with adolescents and youth from vulnerable groups who often face greater barriers to employment. In this process, UNICEF will also collaborate with businesses and other stakeholders to see how to capitalize on digitalization tools and tele-working to create more flexible work opportunities for vulnerable youth groups.

UNECE will be launching an online survey on how the COVID-19 safety measures and economic crisis is affecting MSMEs. The survey targets MSMEs operating in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors as well as those engaged in trade in goods. The aim is to provide the Government with a solid understanding of the pandemic's impact on different economic actors, as a step for designing measures to build stronger and resilient economy after COVID-19 pandemic. UNECE will also train some 30 plus women owners/managers of MSMEs, to be selected in consultation with the government, in identifying, understanding and taking advantage of regulatory and procedural practices in foreign trade in Belarus.

In the future, as part of a wider effort, UNECE is developing a series of online training modules that harness the power of digitalization to make training and skill development more efficient⁴⁵. Preparations are also underway for launching an assessment of the impact of COVID-19-induced supply chain disruptions on female-owned enterprises, in cooperation with UN Women. Work will also focus on helping SMEs benefit from digital trade facilitation, by creating a pilot digital East-West and Black to Baltic Sea corridor: a pilot project for the implementation of a digital corridor (Black Sea – Baltic Sea) may be selected using a package of standards for transport and logistics

⁴⁴ See the Rapid Diagnostics for Assessing the Country Level Impact of COVID-19 on the Economy and Labour Market https://www.ilo.org/emppolicy/pubs/WCMS_743644/lang-en/index.htm; Rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on enterprises and workers in the informal economy in developing and emerging countries; https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/informal-economy/publications/WCMS_743032/lang-en/index.htm; Rapid social protection calculator for covid-19 <https://www.usp2030.org/gess/showresource.action?id=56007>

⁴⁵ Among others, digital trainings tools will cover: i. dematerialization of documents and integrated services for MSMEs engaged in international trade using UN/CEFACT's trade facilitation and e-business standards and tools to harmonize data exchange across countries and regions (e.g. the use of UN/CEFACT reference data models, the Core Components Library, the Single Window Recommendations, Recommendations 4 and 40 on National Trade Facilitation Bodies and on Interagency and Public-Private Cooperation); ii. agricultural quality standards and food loss and waste, with a view to MSME recovery and sustaining and building inclusive supply chains; iii. enabling MSMEs to properly select and put into practice appropriate standards to survive the crisis and capitalize on emerging trade opportunities; and iv. gearing non-tariff measures towards supporting SMEs' recovery from the COVID-19-induced crisis and long-term sustainable development.

electronic document equivalents based on the UN/CEFACT semantic standards and reference data models⁴⁶. **IOM** is developing a long-term reintegration programme containing early recovery solutions for returned Belarusian labor migrants to stimulate launching income-generating activities, conduct necessary trainings on SMEs development, complete a labor market assessment of COVID-19 socio-economic impacts on returning and in-country migrants and pilot a labor market information system.

In difficult times, asylum seekers, refugees and other persons of concerns (PoCs) are very often the population the most affected. The lack of good command of Russian language, eventual discriminations and other aspects have serious impacts on these populations. **UNHCR**, via its cooperation with the concerned ministries but also via local actors (i.e. chamber of commerce, unions of employers, etc.) are trying to minimize these negative impacts in order to facilitate access to employment. Refugee-specific leaflets for employers have been distributed. UNHCR also financially supports innovative activities proposed by PoCs.

Concerning *support to young people and social partners in entrepreneurship and social innovation* **UNFPA** has allied with socially responsible businesses to fundraise to provide protective personal equipment (PPE) to protect Red Cross volunteers who assist with needed help to lonely elderly people who are homebound due to health and/or social reasons.⁴⁷ **UNECE**, through its Private-Public Venture Capital Funds for innovative projects initiative, will work on raising awareness and provide recommendations for Belarus on how to further strengthen innovation policies. Follow-up capacity building is planned on access to finance for innovative enterprises. Belarus also currently participates in two sub-regional projects of ECE: the Innovation Policy Outlook – a sub-regional innovation policy analysis to be published in late 2020; and a sub-regional capacity-building programme focusing on high-growth enterprises.

In the forthcoming months, **UNFPA** will work on improving access to quality medical services and reducing barriers to telehealth access for residents of remote areas through piloting telemedicine consultations, including in the field of reproductive health, based on a rural medical outpatient clinic in one of the regions of the country and developing recommendations for the government to create favorable eco-environment for the development of telemedicine at the regional level. Furthermore, **UNFPA** in cooperation with Belarus Red Cross will develop tools to improve the delivery of communication reaching the elderly. The interventions involve joining forces with business partners Softeco to develop an application to provide easy access and management to volunteers and to develop an on-line training and restructuring of an information platform for pregnant women to substitute pregnancy schools and provide remote support for pregnant women and their families. Work will also be undertaken to develop communication and social media campaigns targeting men under stress and adolescents. **UNECE** will help Belarusian science and technology stakeholders (including Government and SMEs), to develop evidence-based processes

⁴⁶ Belarus, together with Ukraine and Lithuania, can participate in a UN-wide UN Development Account project in support of the dematerialization of trade and transport operations

⁴⁷ IT company Oyper.com has used charity video innovative tools that make it possible to donate directly while watching a video by just clicking one image of the desired donation. This initiative has become an example of successful partnership between UNFPA, the Belarusian Red Cross, the Oyper IT company, and the TNT and Belmuz TV channels, which took over video production and broadcast.

in using procurement systematically to promote and enable experimentation with new ideas, find new ways to recover sustainably and be competitive on international markets (including EAEU markets). **UNECE and UNDP** will join efforts to develop Public-Private Venture Funds for Innovative Projects in Belarus that will improve access to finance for innovative enterprises. The proposal also includes awareness-raising activities on innovation-driven public procurement aiming to increase demand for innovation⁴⁸.

UNDP's efforts will focus on expanding opportunities for Belarus to become a part of the global knowledge economy, diversify export markets, increase its competitiveness, resilience, and the overall sustainability of the national economy. UNDP will support innovations for the benefit of the private sector, which could be applied and commercialized by introducing needed improvements in legislation and policies, leveraging access to financing and knowledge, building institutional capacity for generating and mainstreaming innovations, engaging youth, women and people with disabilities. Advancing business support institutions and building skills for knowledge economy interventions, which will contribute to increased number of residents in the regional techno-parks; help to unlock young talents in the field of engineering and technology; strengthen capacity of business support institutions and professional industries' associations in accelerating startups development based on R&D innovations; build innovation and digital capacity of SMEs through showcasing of digitalization opportunities and expert guidance and advice; expand opportunities for people with disabilities to start and scale up business in profitable sectors of economy applying innovative technologies and business solutions.

With regards to *greening the economy*, **UNECE** will repurpose funds to deliver capacity building activities that could complement green *fiscal stimulus packages or similar policies*. A national workshop on "sustainable housing and urban development and innovative financing of smart sustainable cities projects", will be held in Grodno. to present the findings on the Smart Sustainable City Profile of Grodno and a workshop on "Financing Smart Sustainable City Projects" will also take place. In addition, a training on *formulating and implementing national PPP policy frameworks to promote PPPs as tools to achieve the SDGs*, will be held in Minsk⁴⁹. In addition, a gap analysis for the circular economy will be undertaken, identifying policy, regulatory and institutional limitations that hold back the circular economy transition in a specific policy area and sector identified in those countries⁵⁰. It will draw on existing methodological work in this area and adapt it to the specific needs of the target countries. This gap analysis will be a key input to the advisory missions and national workshops and the formulation of circular economy roadmaps or action plans in the pilot countries (as described below). UNDP has also already started discussions with its national partners (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Ministry of Economy) on policy, legal and

⁴⁸ The proposal follows the analysis and policy recommendations of the UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Belarus, which was published in 2017, whose findings offered advice to promote, and defray the risk of financing, private sector innovation.

⁴⁹ UNECE has developed guidelines on People First PPPs, i.e. on how to ensure that infrastructure PPPs contribute to national sustainable development priorities. The workshop will educate national policy makers on these guidelines and will improve their capacity to apply them in the design of the national PPP policy framework.

⁵⁰ The gap analysis will be based on a set of key performance indicators (KPI), related to competitiveness and innovation (e.g. patents related to recycling and reuse of raw materials); responsible production and consumption (e.g. pollution releases, green public procurement, waste generation and recycling, food waste); smart and sustainable cities (within the concept of the Guide for Circular Cities); and trade of secondary raw materials (e.g. trade of recyclable raw materials cross-border).

regulatory frameworks for green economy. These efforts will be amplified by UNDP's technical assistance - pilot projects to demonstrate economic, environmental and social viability of new "green" technologies; a grant programme for civil society organizations and local municipalities to involve them in green recovery; and intensive outreach and communication campaign promoting the green economy.

UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection will support digitalization of public employment services to make them more accessible for people with disabilities⁵¹. UNDP will also leverage its Acceleration lab to address adverse social and economic impact of the COVID through the development of a viable platform, bringing together the existing knowledge and capacity of technology as well as business and communities to leverage collective expertise to improve provision of public services. UNDP will also support the Government to find solutions so that the recovery can be environmentally sustainable, climate-sensitive, risk informed, energy efficient, and long lasting. This will allow for more strengthened and dynamic livelihoods, resilient rural-urban planning, climate-friendly technologies, and environmental sustainability. To this end, UNDP will foster multi-country cooperation over conjunctive surface and groundwater management in the Bug and Neman Transboundary River Basins and the underlying aquifer systems. UNDP, building on its smart cities work in Novorgrudok, Polotsk and Novopolotsk, will support the launching and day to day operations of public open data platforms for Belarusian municipalities; develop a municipal platform for participatory urban design; deliver capacity building activities for the local administrations to improve knowledge, competencies, and capabilities to manage large volumes of public data.

To provide *rapid and gender-responsive socioeconomic and labor market and business environment diagnostics*, **UNFPA** in cooperation with **UN Women** will conduct the Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) that will serve to identify and meet the different needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, boys and girls during and after a COVID-19 outbreak. The survey will provide essential information about gender roles and responsibilities, capacities and vulnerabilities to inform the recommendations and further planned interventions. **IOM** jointly with other UN Country Agencies will conduct a survey on the needs of homeless and former convicts with a focus on women and older people and identifies whether there are any migrants and victims of trafficking in human beings (VoTs) among the target group. **UNDP** will continue working on behavioral insights as a tool to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in Belarus.⁵² In partnership with the EPAM Systems, UNDP will pilot behavioral intervention to attract more women talent into company's technical ranks and thus bridge the innovation gap by empowering women in Belarusian IT community. Results of the trial will build an evidence base on effectiveness of behavioral insights for promotion of diversity and women participation in the labor market. Ultimately, UNDP will contribute to innovation-driven evidence-based gender policymaking in

⁵¹ Set of practical recommendations will be developed to improve remote work conditions with focus on people with disabilities as well as needed equipment procured.

⁵² As opposed to hard-driven policy changes targeted to "change minds", behavioural insights "change context" – the environment within which we make decisions and respond to cues. UNDP in collaboration with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) explored national gender environment, analyzed behavioural barriers for women employment and entrepreneurship and devised solutions that seek to contribute to women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities in Belarusian economy.

Belarus, UNDP will amplify this initiative by additional technical assistance to attract more women's talent into the IT/engineering technical ranks through providing comprehensive career guidance, improving women's digital competences and promotion of STEM education among women and girls.

The UNCT will also provide assistance to address *trade challenges and facilitating trade flows*. **UNECE** will establish an observatory on Border Crossings Status due to COVID-19. It will also mobilize funding with the goal to facilitate connectivity, through supporting a green and resilient recovery by addressing transboundary and other risks. **UNIDO** will provide recommendations for cooperation among the EAEU countries on issues, such as benchmarking readiness and maturity for digitalization of regional supply chains; issues of harmonization of standards for interoperability; removing barriers and obstacles for the development of resilient, responsive and reconfigurable regional value chains; and fostering creation of regional innovation systems and their network. **FAO** will support the alignment of the national phytosanitary system and legislative frameworks of Belarus with international standards and agreements to increase export of plants and plant products, thus contributing to the improvement of economic competitiveness; its integration with the world's economy, and the development of the private sector. In the face of disruptions of international trade, FAO will also help to add value to primary agricultural produce, diversify markets, support export diversification and create umbrella brands for food products.

The UNCT and IFIs (see Box) will deliver financial assistance and capacity building on *Investments to improve productivity and working conditions in micro and small firms*. **UNDP** through its Project "Support to Economic Development at the Local Level in the Republic of Belarus", has supported business incubators and resource centers for entrepreneurs in 12 districts. UNDP has launched an on-line startup school covering business planning, financial management, marketing and legal issues. In response to the national partners' requests UNDP has also provided counter-crisis targeted business advice for 240 small businesses in regional Belarus. UNDP is partnering with IFC and EBRD on an action plan to improve the access of SMEs to legal support and business advisory services, and to consolidate the information flow towards businesses. It is expected that SMEs in regions will be able to improve their competencies in business planning, digitalization of business, promotion of business partnerships and expansion into new markets **UNDP** has also offered direct grant support to cluster initiatives and social entrepreneurship initiatives in 12 districts of Belarus' regions. In 2020 – early 2021, UNDP will also launch large scale scheme to accelerate startups in the project pilot districts. Looking forward, UNDP will seek to expand its direct support to local businesses in the districts not covered by the project. UNDP will also work on strengthening the capacity of Belarus to assess and advance innovation policies and institutions; expand both funding and financing opportunities for innovative businesses and startups in industries bearing great potential for innovation and capable at minimum to replicate the success of Belarusian IT sector; facilitate inclusion of Belarusian companies in local, regional and global value chains and networks; facilitate better connection between education, research and business needs; promote inclusion and diversity as a pillar of knowledge and green economy.

FAO will assist in strengthening local food markets that have been disrupted by containment measures, notably of high value products that characterize agro- and ecotourism. FAO will support strengthening advisory and extensions services on food production and marketing, especially targeting small holders and SMEs. A special focus will be given to strengthening national capacities in promoting women's entrepreneurship in rural areas, improve the knowledge of specialists on gender issues, and provide them with the opportunity to make appropriate adjustments to the socio-economic development plans for rural areas.

With regards to *E-commerce and digital solutions* that could allow secure access to services needed at the time of crisis, particularly by vulnerable groups. **UNDP**, through its RRF and other initiatives will undertake actions to facilitate building of digital skills for public officials, SMEs and hard to reach vulnerable groups. This component will also encourage engagement of private sector in response to COVID-19 through development and use of innovative social, digital and tech solutions. UNDP will also seek to expand its activities beyond the RRF to support SMEs with focus on Belarusian regions with regards to sustaining and enhancing their business performance through applying innovative and digital solutions, by focusing on expert support for setting conducive regulatory environment for SMEs digital transformation; developing and designing digital solutions to boost e-commerce; and direct support to business initiatives. **ITU** will provide online trainings on digital health technologies, which can be customized to the needs of doctors and technical staff. With regards to *digital payments* support, **UNCTAD** will undertake analysis of trade regulatory procedures, including e-transactions and document exchange and cyber security. **FAO** will support Belarus to develop a digital agriculture strategy and data analysis capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. It will support the digitalization of extension services and develop digital skills in agriculture and rural development for farmers, youth and women. An intelligent agriculture platform will offer digital services to farmers and other agriculture sector stakeholders; facilitate the access and use of digital technologies by smallholders and SMEs to keep working and stay connected including in the agri-food industry. As a part of the platform a dedicated block for digital marketplace for agricultural inputs and products will support smallholders and SMEs to increase market opportunities for their products.

On policy advice for *nature-based solutions for development, including for SMEs*, **UNIDO's** forthcoming project plans to put forward recommendations for collaboration among EAEU countries on the establishment of Smart Manufacturing centers using 4IR technologies following the Brest 4IR Demonstration and Innovation Center (BDIC), and Brest Science and Technology Park experience. UNIDO will also work on *business linkages support*, through a project that will establish a pilot demonstration and innovation center for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) technologies and business models in the Brest region of Belarus. The BDIC will support smart manufacturing technological learning and innovation and will involve beneficiaries from the Vitebsk and Mogilev regions, as well as representatives from other countries in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

UNDP tapping on its current work on conservation of wetland biodiversity and sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems in the western Dvina transboundary river basin, will

support transboundary effective management of freshwater resources and facilitate cooperation in conservation, restoration and sustainable management in this area. UNDP will also support building national partners' capacities to design and implement market-based climate finance mechanisms; improve and continuously update Belarus' Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and set-up a robust Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system for GHG emissions in the priority sectors of national economy. Finally, it will also help to reduce barriers to promote electric mobility through the introduction of ultra-fast charging stations and complete the phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFCs) consumption with support of low Global Warming Potential (GWP) technologies. In order to make smallholders more resilient to the economic shock caused by the pandemic, **FAO** will support decreasing their dependency on external farm inputs, particularly medicine and feed, fertilizers and pesticides by improving crop and husbandry practices in respect of the environment. FAO will also provide support to reduce smallholders' need for antimicrobial use and hence antimicrobial resistance through improving animal health management and reducing disease incidence. It will finally assist to enhance the capacity of veterinary services to prevent, detect, and respond to animal health diseases.

Pillar 4. Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration

Across the world, large-scale fiscal measures, supported by targeted monetary easing, will be needed to contain the spread of the disease, ease the shock to jobs, reduce layoffs and guarantee minimum living standards, with a special focus on vulnerable population groups. In Belarus, macroeconomic constraints have reduced the margin of maneuver for authorities both with regards to monetary easing as well as for fiscal stimuli. Thus, financial assistance by IFIs has become more central than in other countries to address most urgent needs. UNCT interventions have largely focused on providing advice and technical assistance for available resources to be used more efficiently.

Some IFIs have undertaken *analytical, advisory and technical assistance services*, which describe the direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 as it affected the Belarusian economy (see Box 1). The **UNECE** prepared a toolkit with instruments that UNECE has offered to address the COVID-19 response with a focus on transboundary cooperation and issue-based coalition. At the regional level, UNECE is focusing on 3 priorities: connectivity, with a focus on transport and trade (including digitalization of trade related procedures), transboundary risks linked to environment; and the need to foster green and resilient recovery. UNECE participates in 4 out of five UN Development account projects that have been recently launched (i.e. on trade and transport connectivity; social protection (statistics); urban economies and support to medium and small enterprises (MSMEs)). Belarus could become a beneficiary of these projects.

IOM plans to provide emergency training for border officials on detection, screening, registration, isolation and referral of ill travelers, develop relevant standard operation procedures (SOPs), support to active surveillance, including health screening, referral and data collection at POEs. IOM and La Strada Programme have launched the information campaign targeting labour migrants

(both Belarusians working abroad and foreigners working in Belarus - namely citizens of China and Uzbekistan, who are the most numerous amongst foreign workers within the Belarusian labour market) to increase their awareness of labour rights in the context of COVID-19.

UNIDO will provide *stepped-up technical support to Belarus in improving the evidence base for policy making, including in the emergency response*. One project will provide recommendations for policy making on innovation system building for leveraging potentials of frontier technologies and for building resilient, responsive and reconfigurable national supply chains to external shocks such as the global pandemic. Another project will also will provide recommendations for cooperation among the EAEU countries on smart manufacturing, innovation system building; digitalization of regional supply chains; harmonization of standards for interoperability; removing barriers and obstacles for the development of resilient, responsive and reconfigurable regional value chains; and fostering creation of regional innovation systems and their network.

UNDP will continue its policy advice and technical support for the negotiations on Belarus accession to WTO. Building on this project, UNDP will work on sustaining inclusive and sustainable economic growth through policy advice and technical support to improve legal and regulatory framework for foreign trade; promotion of digital solutions in trade policy; setting up National Export Promotion Centre; and training and advice for business entities in production of innovative export-oriented goods.

With regards to *advice on social expenditure monitoring and mapping of budgets for social development priorities to assist governments in rebalancing public expenditures*. The **World Bank** has been working in Belarus to promote policy reform on its social assistance system, which preceded the COVID, as follows: 1) boosting share of means tested cash transfers 2) expanding the scope of unemployment assistance and 3) strengthening energy social assistance. **UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA** and **UN Women** plan to roll-out a joint project on Promoting sustainable development budgeting that prioritize vulnerable populations in Belarus. The project will address the long-term challenges in public finance reform that have become more urgent after COVID-19.

On the issue of *conducting comprehensive analysis at the household level and undertaking context-specific socio-economic impact analyses of the crisis*. The World Bank has been involved in the tracking of social policies enacted by Governments to shield vulnerable populations. **IOM** has launched a needs assessment to identify immediate and humanitarian needs of returning Belarusian labor migrants and in-country labor migrants with a view to estimate risks and vulnerabilities related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including risks of human trafficking, as a basis for future assistance programmes and communication activities. The assessment will target 1) labor migrants from Azerbaijan, China, Lithuania, Turkey, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Ukraine in Belarus with a special focus on those in need of different types of assistance such as health services, information, cash assistance for food/shelter, or return to countries of origin; 2) Belarusian labor migrants who due to COVID-19 restrictions lost or terminated their employment abroad and had to return to Belarus.

Box 1. Building on synergies between the work of IFIs and the UNCT on COVID-19 response

Some of the resident IFIs (e.g. World Bank, IFC, EBRD) have actively participated in the Task Force discussions that shaped the UNCT policy response. With regards to the UN Pillars, the following activities have been reported by agencies as creating synergies with the UN response:

In addition to financing health procurement and social policy reforms (see pillars 1 and 2), the **World Bank** undertook research that anticipates reduced growth, which will compound the external impact of the COVID-Pandemic (e.g. ongoing contraction in its main trading partners, and the oil-price and oil supply shocks). In a context of exchange rate depreciation (by almost 19 percent since the start of the year) and rising price pressures, the contraction has negatively impacted consolidated government revenues and the response has been modest, with a focus on temporary fiscal measures. Additional scope for more decisive fiscal and monetary stimulus is limited. After supporting the economic recovery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, medium-term fiscal reforms will be needed as well as measures to increase expenditure efficiency in key areas. Reforms will be needed to ensure a robust, transparent recovery based on disease surveillance, balanced use of social restrictions, strengthened health system preparedness and support to cash-strapped individuals and firms.

The **IFC**, has provided finance that helped inject liquidity through banks so that employment is maintained and to ensure the survival rate of firms is not affected. Through its Real Sector Crisis Response Facility, it supports existing clients in the infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture and services industries vulnerable to the pandemic. With regards to improving the productivity of MSMEs, since March 2020, IFC has been providing fast-track financial support to private companies to sustain affected economies and protect jobs during this period of significant global uncertainty*. Through the existing Global Trade Finance Program, it will cover the payment risks of financial institutions so they can provide trade financing to companies that import and export goods. Furthermore, IFC will offer support to firms through its Global Trade Liquidity Program, and the Critical Commodities Finance Program, both of which offer funding and risk-sharing support to local banks so they can continue to finance companies in emerging markets. Finally, its Working Capital Solutions program provides funding to emerging-market banks to extend credit to help businesses shore up their working capital. IFC also works on policy advice in the area of competition policy and business facilitation, and it recently completed a survey on SME response that will inform its future work.

EBRD assessed the impact and opportunities linked to external shocks affecting domestic demand and addressed impacts in Belarus that are linked to its structural openness and dependence on exports. Whereas a GDP decline is expected for 2020, a rebound may happen already in 2021. EBRD assessed the prospects of a long-term recovery based on rebuilding of supply chains and diversifying trade partners in a new context of localizing regional value chains in the EU neighborhood, for which Belarus is well placed geographically. Activities linked to machinery manufacturing, equipment, chemicals, motor vehicle and pharmaceuticals were highlighted as potential recipients of new investments, including with financial support by EBRD.

* This include \$8 billion USD in fast-track financing to help companies affected by the outbreak (the IFC response is part of the World Bank Group's \$14 billion fast-track financing package).

Pillar 5. Social Cohesion and Community Resilience

Communities worldwide have been most affected by the outbreak. At the same time, they also hold the key for successfully addressing the negative consequences of the pandemic. This dynamic, which holds true on a global scale, is replicated in Belarus, as manifested by the local consequences of the outbreak. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Belarus, civil society organizations have been at the forefront of contributing to the response to the epidemic and have offered or contributed to the provision of essential services – both social assistance and legal services – to members of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, or persons who suffer from substance abuse and addiction. Civil society organizations have also been instrumental in monitoring the human rights and social consequences of the outbreak in Belarus. To identify children and families in vulnerable condition due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF is working with the World Bank to conduct a second analysis of data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6), which covers 21 SDG indicators disaggregated by wealth, gender, region and disability status.

With regards to social cohesion and community resilience, UN agencies operating in Belarus have been engaging with and relying on partnerships with civil society organizations in defining and delivering the UN response to COVID-19 in Belarus. As an example, **the UN Belarus COVID-19 Task Force on human rights and vulnerable communities**, co-facilitated by UNFPA, UNAIDS, and OHCHR, has been inviting civil society organizations to its meetings and including their recommendations in its action points. Belarus also benefits from a global initiative by ITU, which has set up its Global Network Resiliency Platform (#REG4COVID), where regulators, policy makers and other interested stakeholders can share information, monitor initiatives, and exchange experiences on innovative policy and regulatory measures to ensure communities remain connected and harness the full power and potential of ICTs during this crisis and to prepare for the medium and long-term recovery from COVID-19⁵³. UNDP will support national partners in their work to broaden accessibility of public services through providing technical and expert support to develop a convenient and easy-in-use digital mechanism to receive public services; technical and expert support for digitizing paper-based archive records and capacity building for civil registry and archives officials.

With a view to *empowering community resilience, coverage and equitable service delivery*, the UNCT has been gathering data from and reaching out to diverse communities (see pillars 1 and 2). Efforts to reach out to community-based organizations and vulnerable groups will continue. The availability and accessibility of risk information for persons with disabilities, for example, or for certain particular groups, may need to be enhanced, also to ensure that such individuals, and others belonging to vulnerable communities, are informed of their rights and the preventative measures they are advised to take, and to ensure that their voices are heard. **UN-Habitat** under the “Urban economic and financial recovery and resilience building in the time of COVID-19” will support the development of strategies and recommendations for the city of Grodno, which can be scaled up and applied for a wider context of Belarus. UN-Habitat is also building a multi-disciplinary coalition with global thought leaders to develop new insights on longer-term policy changes and new ways of working and living. UN-Habitat will support local government in designing economic mitigation measures and policies considering formal and informal sectors as well as preparing for early

⁵³ <https://reg4covid.itu.int/>

recovery. Moreover, UN-Habitat will assist the local governments to prioritize interventions while improving the city prosperity using practical tools (e.g. City Prosperity Index (CPI), spatial profiling) in line with one of the major UN-Habitat response area to tackle COVID-19 “Support local governments and community driven solutions”. Another area of interventions lies in improving available urban data through the bolstering of digital knowledge base of local governments through strengthening GIS expertise. Belarus can leverage from the current normative work in spatializing challenges and opportunities of the urban areas to create evidences for strategic interventions and navigating investments in a more sustainable manner. **UNICEF** has also developed materials for parents, children and frontline workers with children on how to talk with children about COVID, hygiene and infection prevention messaging, as well as psycho-social support for parents and how they can be better prepared to support their children’s specific needs. To inform response measures to the COVID-19 situation, UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, is conducting a study of the needs and capabilities of girls and women with disabilities in the Republic of Belarus and a second analysis of the data obtained as a result of a survey on disability issues.

To ensure equitable service delivery **UNHCR** will maintain cooperation and liaison with the state authorities and non-governmental partner organizations in order persons of concern to the UN Refugee Agency enjoy unhampered access to their rights, are treated in practice on a par with citizens of Belarus. Where required, **UNHCR** will resort to direct interventions with the stakeholders and legal support.

In the future, **UNDP** through its RRF will undertake work to improve community resilience: interventions will aim at strengthening community and institutions resilience through improved communication, and social cohesion, including by mobilizing volunteer’s networks and expanding outreach of national and local COVID-19 response measures to the public with focus on hard-to-reach groups. Likewise, **UNICEF** works with volunteers – adolescents and youth – both to develop outreach services. Training sessions have focused on giving counseling skills to youth volunteers and volunteers from services such as youth-friendly health services to reach out to peers on issues of infection prevention and control information as well as psycho-social support.

UNDRR will work on improving cities resilience through its project ‘Making Cities Resilient Campaign’, providing a solid baseline for developing local resilience action plans. The campaign aims to support sustainable urban development by promoting resilience activities and increasing local level understanding of disaster risk. The campaign comprehends various tools, but the two ones envisioned for deployment in Belarus cities are the Public Health Addendum, promulgated by UNDRR with the support of WHO, which aims to strengthen and integrate coverage of the many aspects of public health issues and consequences of disasters in the public administration; and the Resilience Scorecards, a set of assessments that allow local governments to measure their disaster resilience. These tools also help to monitor and review progress and challenges in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: 2015-2030 and are often used as a baseline analysis for the preparation of the disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies.

UNECE will undertake several activities to enhancing national capacities to develop and implement energy efficiency standards for buildings. It will also intervene to develop partnerships on community healthcare, which could be financed by joint public and private sources, including equity investors and donors, and focus on 3 'clusters': food security, community healthcare, and industrial district innovation, helping to boost local SMEs in the delivery of such services⁵⁴. **IOM** in partnership with the WHO Country Office launched a series of online trainings on protecting vulnerable migrants and victims of human trafficking in the COVID-19 context bringing together in-field coordinators, psychologists, and social workers from 11 NGOs, including the Red Cross Society with operational presence in every region of Belarus. As a springboard to discuss COVID-fueled common challenges in securing access to essential services to at-risk populations as well as new ways of working, IOM will proceed with regular capacitating of NGOs on the emerging needs of vulnerable stranded and returned migrants.

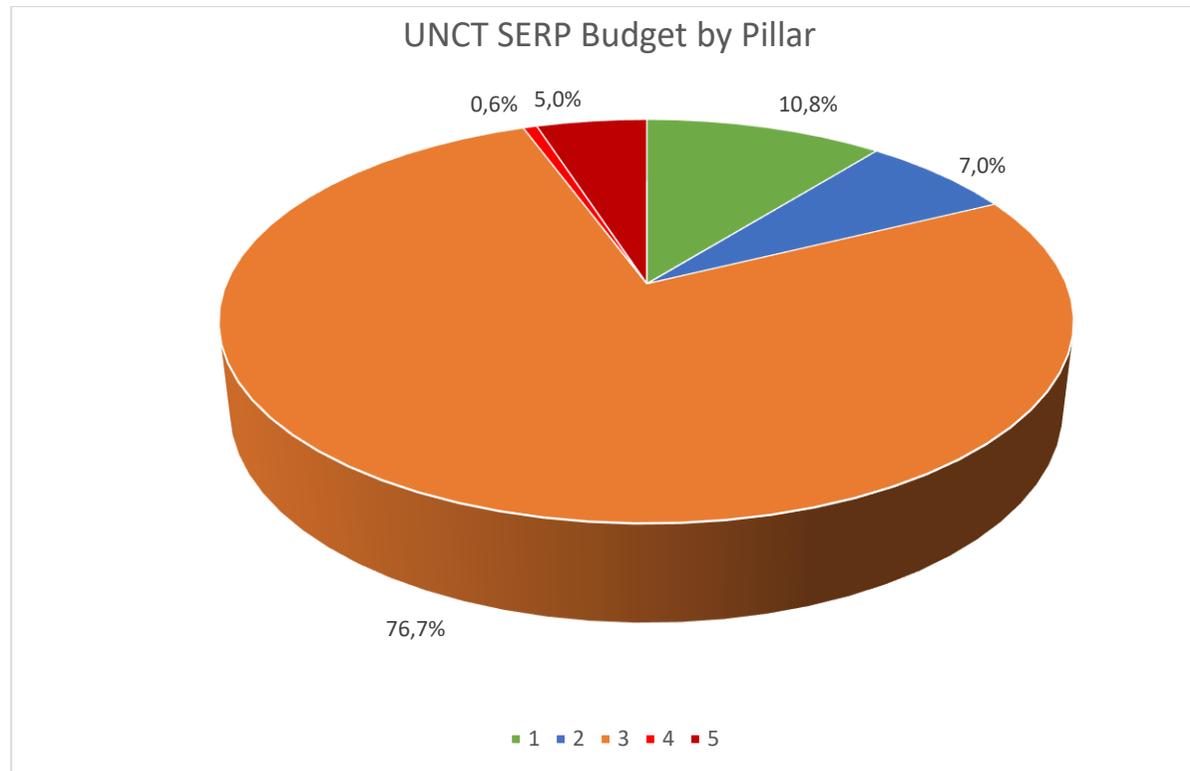
Support to fundamental freedoms and the rule of law will also be crucial to ensure that the response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Belarus will remain effective. Whereas in many respects, the very limited scope of physical distancing measures adopted in Belarus has resulted in a comparatively limited additional impact on human rights of measures aimed at preventing the spread of the infection, there is a need to minimize the exclusion from access to certain rights of members of some particular groups. These include persons deprived of their liberty in prisons and other places (where due to their closed nature, overcrowding, and prevailing sanitary conditions, constitute environments where the COVID-19 infection may easily spread), irregular migrants, asylum-seekers, children in institutions, and individuals receiving residential care. To help improve the consequences of this situation, **UN Belarus COVID-19 Task Force on human rights and vulnerable communities** has been coordinating UN responses as they relate to the situation of vulnerable groups. The international human rights obligations of Belarus and its strong commitment to the SDG agenda similarly require Belarus to ensure that its response to COVID-19 is grounded in human rights and rule of law principles. Clearly, adhering to the principle of leaving no one behind is the only way to effectively combat the spread of the infection across all groups in society. **OHCHR**, in particular, has provided policy advice and recommendations to state authorities to address the human rights consequences of COVID-19, including with a particular focus on persons deprived of their liberty and persons with disabilities. In supporting the provision of free legal aid to vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities and victims/survivors of domestic violence), **OHCHR** is also seeking to enhance access to legal remedies for those affected by the negative human rights consequences of COVID-19. In addition, OHCHR is completing an assessment of the response to COVID-19 and its impact on persons with disabilities in Belarus, which will form the basis for future engagement and assistance on the topic.

With regards to the longer-term agenda to build back better through a green transition and digital transformation, **UNECE** will be involved in strengthening the human rights-environment nexus

⁵⁴ UNECE can provide support to city authorities and the PPP Unit to structure a PPP Hub at the level of a city to deliver a pipeline of municipal services that will increase community resilience targeting vulnerable groups, in line with the UNECE Guiding Principles on People-First PPPs for the SDGs.

through (a) implementing decision VI/8c of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention; (b) promoting effective access to environmental information online; (c) strengthening capacities of public authorities to carry out public participation procedures; and (d) raising awareness among judiciary, review bodies and law enforcement about the Convention's obligations. It will also aid with finalizing the legal reforms on Strategic Environmental Assessment and transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment in light of the provisions of the Protocol on SEA and the Espoo Conventions. and for finalizing the legal reforms on SEA and transboundary EIA (workshop on rationale for amending SEA and EIA legislation). A **UNIDO** project will also contribute to strengthening community resilience through digital innovation ecosystem building.

ANNEX I. List of Activities by Implementation Period, Budget and Resources to be Mobilized



Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
3	Global COVID-19 Integrated Response on socio-economic impact, health system support, and crisis management and response.	UNDP	2020 (ongoing)	mobilized	Ministry of Economy	250,000 under its Rapid Response Facility (RRF)	
3	Support to Local Economic Development in 12 districts of Belarus (direct support).	UNDP	The project launched in February 2019.	Support was provided to 12 business incubators in regions (1,178,121 USD). Additional direct support to 8 cluster initiatives (460,927 USD) and to social entrepreneurship initiatives (1,587,759 USD) is to be provided throughout 2020. Upon the agreement with the national partner - project's coverage to be expanded (additional 6 regions).	Ministry of Economy	6,660,000	2,220,000
4	Support to WTO Accession: Policy advice and technical support for the negotiation process.	UNDP	Ongoing project. Extended till July 2021	122 668 USD spent in 2020	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	222,668	100,000
3	Support SMEs with focus on Belarusian regions in sustaining and enhancing their business performance though applying innovative and digital solutions, including: 1) Expert support for setting conducive regulatory environment for SMEs digital transformation; 2) developing and designing digital	UNDP	estimated timeline: 36 months. (MPTF proposal -12 months).	Funds to be mobilized (MPTF proposal 158,000)	Ministry of Economy (subject to the consent)	3,000,000	3,000,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	solutions to boost e-commerce; (The focus of the project, as well as the activities are subject to agreement with national partners)		Indicative start date Jan 2021				
5	Digitalizing the System of Civil Registry for Efficient Delivery of Public Services in Belarus, including: 1) Technical and expert support to develop a convenient and easy-in-use digital mechanism to receive public services; 2) Technical and expert support for digitizing paper-based archive records; 3) Capacity building for civil registry and archives officials.	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 36 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Justice	3,000,000	3,000,000
3&4	Aid for Trade in Belarus - promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Belarus by strengthening trade-related capacity building and increasing trade performance and international competitiveness to better mitigate the consequences and recover after the COVID-19 induced crisis. Project involves: policy advice to improve legal and regulatory framework for foreign trade; digital solutions in trade policy; Setting up National Export Promotion Centre;	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 36 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	3,750,000 (2,500,000 is positively expected to be secured by the end of 2020).	1,250,000
3	Attracting women's talent into the IT technical ranks in Belarus through providing comprehensive career guidance and improving women's digital competences. Project involves: 1) Mapping the IT jobs profiles in demand by employers and define skills and digital competences necessary for the identified IT jobs profiles; 2) Developing a digital tool to identify existing skills, competences, attitudes and experience and design and implement a learning pathway to build necessary digital skills and competences; 3) Promoting IT jobs for women as a source of empowerment and profile successful women role models/ ambassadors in IT sector. (The focus of the project, as well as the activities are subject to agreement with national partners)	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 24 months. (MPTF proposal – 12 months) Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funds to be mobilized. (MPTF proposal – 41,435 USD)	Ministry of Education (subject to the consent)	850,000	850,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
3	Accelerating development of new SMEs digital products, services and business models that will allow SMEs to sustain their business during COVID-19 suppression and recovery phases. Project involves launching an acceleration programme aimed at digital transformation of SMEs in Belarus with focus on SMEs operating in the regions (Digital Journey). At least 50 companies will receive guidance and a comprehensive support in developing new products, services or business models using innovation and digital tools. (The focus of the project, as well as the activities are subject to agreement with national partners)	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 12 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021.	Funds to be mobilized (MPTF proposal – 60,000 USD).	Ministry of Economy (subject to the consent)	60,000	60,000
3	Enable, empower and connect women to start and successfully scale up business applying modern technologies and business solutions to assist women in overcoming structural barriers, limited access to finance, and information asymmetry multiplied by COVID-19. (The focus of the project, as well as the activities are subject to agreement with national partners)	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 12 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021.	Funds to be mobilized (MPTF proposal – 171,000 USD).	Ministry of Economy	171,000	171,000
2	Support community and institutions resilience through strengthening communication, digitalization, and social cohesion for COVID-19 recovery. Project involves: 1) Building a network of community volunteers; 2) Facilitating digital volunteers' platform; 3) Supporting national capacities in leveraging volunteers' potential; 4) Creating an enabling legal and institutional environment for volunteerism development; 5) Promoting volunteerism culture and practices in Belarus.	UNDP	Current support is till 9 October. Additional 12 months are needed. (109,384 USD) indicative start date Nov 2021	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (subject to the consent)	1,109,384	1,000,000
3	Capacity Building for Emission Trading and Strengthened MRV in the Republic of Belarus. Project involves: 1) Building Belarus' capacities to	UNDP	The project was registered on 13 May, 2020.	.	Ministry of Natural Resources and	840,000	500,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	design and implement market-based climate finance mechanisms; 2) Improvement and continuously updating Belarus' Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and set-up a robust Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system for GHG emissions in the priority sectors.		Estimated timeline: 36 months		Environmental Protection		
3	Providing modern mechanisms and digital environment for efficient labour markets in response to COVID-19. Project involves developing of the methodology of digitalizing the process of employment and piloting the new platform as well as developing digital conditions for functioning public employments services. Interventions will include: policy advice; procurement of consulting services; seminars/trainings/workshops/consultations; software development and testing; procurement of technical equipment; assessment of the telecommuting costs and financial effects of PWD employment; creation the opportunities for remote access for employment and job facilitation measures for vulnerable groups; procurement of consulting services; seminars/trainings/workshops/consultations; and procurement of technical equipment.	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 30 months. Indicative start date 2020-2021.	funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection	2,500,000	2,500,000
2	Reduce the negative impact of crisis situations, in particular the COVID-19 epidemic, on the quality of life of vulnerable groups and their access to basic social services. Project involves: 1) building capacity of representatives of vulnerable groups (PWD, the elderly, etc.) to improve their competence in digital literacy, effective employment, self-monitoring of health status, etc., allowing to reduce the impact of negative socioeconomic factors on their quality of life during periods of epidemics, infections and other crisis situations, effectively overcome their consequences and expand universal access to basic	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date 2021	funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection	2,000,000	2,000,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	social services; 2) capacity building of the representatives of the vulnerable groups and train the trainer programme, representatives of government partners working with the end beneficiaries 3) procurement of consulting services; 3) research on the existing measures, needs assessment, best practices; 4) software development; 5) information strategy development; and 6) low-value grants						
1	Promoting active aging and reducing the risks of developing NCDs men aged 35+. Project involves: 1) defining the information strategy and tools to overcome stereotypes and promote healthy lifestyle among men 35+; 2) research on stereotypes and behavioural insights; 3) information strategy; 4) capacity building; 5) grant support of promising local initiatives; 6) work with private sector to promote healthy lifestyle at the corporate level; 7) procurement of PPE and medical goods	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 40 months. Indicative start date 2022	funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Health	2,000,000	2,000,000
1	Project component on "Maintenance and advancement of the health of vulnerable groups in the Republic of Belarus under the spread of COVID-19" under the Project "Preventing non-communicable diseases, promoting healthy lifestyle and support to modernization of the health system in Belarus" (BELMED)	UNDP	July-August 2020 completed (secured funds). For new activities, estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date 2021.	110,000 USD secured 1,500,000USD funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection	1,610,000	1,500,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
1	Project component on “Preventing non-communicable diseases, promoting healthy lifestyle and support to modernization of the health system in Belarus” (BELMED). Project involved Procurement of PPE and joint PR campaign with the Red Cross	UNDP	April-June 2020		Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection	18,246	0
2	Enhancing the capacity of vulnerable groups (residents of the boarding homes) in digital communication in [post-] COVID-19 environment. Project involves provision of technical equipment and capacity building to introduce online services and communication opportunities for the patients of boarding homes; procurement of hardware and software; and other capacity building activities	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date 2020.	Funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection	1,000,000	1,000,000
3	Reducing barriers to promote electric mobility in the Republic of Belarus through the introduction of ultra-fast charging stations. Project involves changes to legislation, regulations, and policy; pilot investments to stimulate the necessary infrastructure investments in the charging network	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 48 months. Indicative start date 2022-2023	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	4,297,945	3,000,000
3	Completion of the phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFCs) consumption with support of low Global Warming Potential (GWP) technologies in Belarus. Project involves assistance with a comprehensive Ozone Depleting Substance Alternatives survey; Practical implementation of upgraded national legislation on control of import/export and use of HCFCs and their alternatives; Improvement of Customs capacity on import/export control; demonstration of zero-ODP (Ozone Depleting Potential) and low-GWP energy efficient cooling technologies in various sectors of the economy; and completing the upgrading and strengthening of the servicing sector capacity including Recovery/recycling/reclamation of refrigerants and temporary storage of waste/unusable refrigerants	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 48 months. Indicative start date 2021.	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	4,216,000	2,500,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
3	Fostering multi-country cooperation over conjunctive surface and groundwater management in the Bug and Neman Transboundary River Basins and the underlying aquifer systems. Project involves: 1) transboundary cooperation in common understanding of the water resources of the shared basins, in particular increasing climatic variability and change and to move towards joint planning and management of the basins; 2) Transboundary agreement on the policy, legal and institutional reforms, and the investments that will be needed to improve water security and resilience to the impacts of climatic variability and change, and to the enhance the sustainability of the transboundary freshwater resources and dependent ecosystems in the Bug and Neman basins; 3) Pilot testing of conjunctive management solutions, and consolidating transboundary coordination and cooperation.	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 48 months. Indicative start date 2021-2022.	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	4,850,000	3,500,000
3	Conservation of Wetland Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Freshwater Ecosystems in the Western Dvina/Daugava Transboundary River Basin. Project involves transboundary effective management of freshwater resources within the Western Dvina Basin; and Transboundary cooperation in conservation, restoration and sustainable management of wetlands and associated freshwater ecosystems in the Western Dvina Basin	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 60 months. Indicative start date 2022.	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	8,826,941	5,000,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
2&3	<p>“City of People” - open municipality to promote cooperation within community. Project involves support in development of municipal data strategies for the pilot municipalities as an infrastructure for smart cities; support in establishment and operation of open data public platforms for Belarusian municipalities; elaboration of a municipal platform for participatory urban design and public consultations for a wide range of urban projects; capacity building activities for the local administrations to integrate these data in the process of decision-making; to cooperate with stakeholders to create added value and develop innovative services; and organization of the peer-to-peer training for representatives of Belarusian municipalities with EU municipalities advanced in open data.</p>	UNDP	<p>Estimated timeline: 24 months. Funds to be mobilized.</p> <p>Indicative start date 2020-2021.</p>	Funds to be mobilized.	Local municipalities (Polack, Navapolack, Navahrudak)	400,000	400,000
1	<p>Stress management and prevention as a key factor in the appearance and spread of non-communicable diseases in the population. Project involves: 1. Establishment and support of a system of universal accessible psychotherapeutic care for the population (including socially vulnerable groups) and prevention of the impact of stress as a key factor in the spread of non-communicable diseases among the population; 2. Organization and conducting of research on the impact of stress factors on the appearance and progress of the leading NCDs and on the psychological and psychotherapeutic needs of the population (including vulnerable groups). 3. Holding information campaigns for the public on developing skills to identify and manage stress among the population</p>	UNDP	<p>Estimated timeline: 36 months. Indicative start date 2020-2021</p>	Funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Health, NGOs	1,500,000	1,500,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
3	Support professional and business VET education with the focus on engineering and technology to unlock entrepreneurial initiative of young professionals in regional Belarus. Project involves:1) expert support for revision of educational programmes of six pilot VET facilities to design and introduce “starting business” course tailored to the profiles of the pilot VET institutions; 2) Equip technical laboratories for engineering skills development and prototype manufacturing; 3) Support the participation of Belarusian VET institutions in national and international skills competitions. (The focus of the project, as well as the activities are subject to agreement with national partners)	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 36 months. Indicative start in 2021-2022	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Education (subject to the consent)	2,000,000	2,000,000
3	Support to Green Economy. Project involves addressing policy, legal and regulatory frameworks. It will include pilot projects to demonstrate economic, environmental and social viability of new “green” technologies; a grant programme for civil society organizations and local municipalities to involve them in green recovery; and intensive outreach and communication campaign promoting “green” economy.	UNDP	Estimated timeline: 48 months. Indicative start date 2022	Funds to be mobilized.	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Housing and Communal Services, CSOs, local authorities	6,000,000	6,000,000
3	Training and professional orientation for 100 women and girls with disabilities to enhance their transitional (“21st century”) skills and employability. The intervention will be rolled out in cooperation with Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and its Labour Research Institute and Retraining Institute. CSO organizations, such as the Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities and private sector will also be established.	UNICEF	Estimated timeline: 15 months starting October 2020	Funds to be mobilized (MPTF proposal) 35,000 secured (in-kind)	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection	279,565	244,565
1	UNICEF, under its Country Response Plan assisted line ministries with critical PPE supplies. A dedicated procurement team was set up and working within the	UNICEF	2020-2021	Mobilized 250,000 USD resources from private	Line ministries	1,600,000,000	300,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	country office in close coordination and with support from the Supply Division in Copenhagen.			sector and 1,050,000 USD from international donors.			
2	Assessing the COVID socioeconomic impact on families with children.	UNICEF	2020-2021	Repurposed 30,000 USD from UNICEF and the World Bank resources and 30,000 USD mobilized from USAID	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (TBC), other line ministries	60,000	
2	Study of needs and opportunities of girls and women with disabilities in the Republic of Belarus and secondary analysis of Disability Survey data to inform response to the COVID-19 situation	UNICEF	2021	Mobilized from the RF	Research Institute for Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Belstat	50,000	
2	Secondary data analysis of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey identifying children and families at risk vulnerable to the COVID-19	UNICEF	2020-2021	Mobilized from the World Bank	Belstat (TBC), Ministries of Labour and Social Protection, Health, Education	19,000	
1	Capacitating the education system in meeting emerging needs of children and their families in light of the ongoing situation with COVID-19.	UNICEF	2020-2021	To be mobilized	Ministry of Education	750,000	750,000
1	Addressing the immediate needs of most vulnerable groups such as children, through procurement and supply of personal protective items, critical hygiene supplies; and provision of WASH services (hygiene promotion campaigns and small-scale rehabilitation of hand-washing facilities)	UNICEF	2020	To be mobilized	Ministry of Education	500,000	500,000
1	Joint project to support vulnerable segments of the population (i.e. children, adolescents and their families). The project will strengthen capacities of the education system in meeting emerging needs of children and their families in light of the ongoing situation with COVID-19. Actions include instruction for teachers on how to work online and recommendations for the development of distant learning system	UNICEF	2020-2021	Re-purposed and private (an investment of 100,000 USD by each partner will be devoted to a plan that aims channeling financial resources to assist in the necessary procurement for vulnerable groups)	Ministry of Education	200,000	

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
1, 2, 3	<u>ECD/ECI</u> – support in telehealth provisions for ECI outreach: (i) strengthening competencies of available health ECD/ECI workforce to provide telehealth and ECI services (provide on-line training resources, guidance for telehealth provision, develop standards and policies for teleservices, resources to increase digital literacy, digital platforms as resource repositories for professionals); (ii) influencing financing and expenditure decisions in the recovery phase through costing and documentation of new cost-effective modalities of service provision (distance home visiting for parental counselling, distance support for routine based ECI).	UNICEF	2021	To be mobilized	Ministry of Education	350,000	316,000
2	<u>Child Protection</u> – (i) continuity of case management for front line social work and social service workforce in terms of remote support to families and children, and provision of services, including support to social work agencies (center of social pedagogues, territorial centers), (ii) psychological support for children, parents and teachers (including children who experienced or witnessed violence), including support to existing children’s hotline and online counseling services to raise children’s and youth’s awareness about the resource and enhance capacities to respond to heightened stresses, including related to COVID-19, and clear referral pathways; (iii) strengthening prevention mechanisms of VAC in cyber space	UNICEF	2021	To be mobilized	Ministry of Education (TBC), Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Internal Affairs	500,000	500,000
5	<u>Risk Communication</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily social media and traditional media monitoring via dedicated service or partner - Quick response to requests from publics - Two-way communication in social media - Multi-faceted information messaging 	UNICEF	2021	To be mobilized	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education	60,000	60,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	- Articles on the website and webinars on psychosocial support and mental health, antibullying practices, hygiene practices, cyber safety - Webinars, practical video instructions and leaflets						
1	Support to PLHIV community on antiretrovirals (ARVs) home and post-delivery; psychological counselling and legal support; online trainings and IT support (recording of online lessons for PLHIV, procurement of tablets to ensure online access and avoid isolation); HIV-testing for homeless people and condom distribution.	UNAIDS	2020-2021	To be mobilized	Ministry of Health		10,000
1	Support addressing the COVID-19 prevention among the elderly; strengthening the coordinated system of comprehensive COVID-19 prevention among vulnerable groups.	UNFPA	2020	EU and core funds	Ministry of Health, the Belarus Red Cross	150,000	170000
1	Support for MoH in development of national recommendations on COVID-19 related preventive measures in perinatal care in line with international standards.	UNFPA	2020	core funding (\$1,500)	Ministry of Health	3,000	
1	Procurement of PPE and medical supplies for the COVID response	UNFPA	2020	core funding (\$65,000)	Ministry of Health, the Belarus Red Cross, CSOs	85,000	
1	COVID related capacity building activities for healthcare workers	UNFPA	2020-2021	Core funding	Ministry of Health	5,000	
1	Brokering new partnerships with IT companies to support BRC's activities to prevent COVID-19 on a pro bono basis (web applications to manage BRC's volunteers; unique new fundraising canal	UNFPA	2020	Core funding (3,000) , in-kind contributions from IT companies	Belarus Red Cross	6,000	
2	Response to DV/GBV during the COVID 19 outbreak (a rapid needs' assessment, free hotline for the survivors, capacity building of specialist)	UNFPA	2020	core funding, SIDA, in-kind contributions from mobile operators	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry of Education (subject to the consent), Ministry of Health (subject to the consent), NGOs	100,000	

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
2	Establishing On-line School for pregnant women and their families to contain COVID outbreak	UNFPA	2020-2021	\$70000 (core funds)	NGO "MamaPro"	95,000	
3	Providing telehealth access for residents in rural areas to mitigate COVID-19 risks.	UNFPA	2021-2022	Funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Health, local authorities of pilot place, health care institutions	247,000	225,000
4	Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) to identify and meet the different needs of men and women during and after a COVID-19 outbreak	UNFPA	2020	EU, core funding	NGOs	10,000	
5	Information outreach activities on COVID prevention for PWD using plain language; older people, pregnant women; older people living in intuitions, and their caregivers	UNFPA	2020-2021	UK, Core funding	Ministry of Health, the Belarus Red Cross	10,000	
3	Recovering Better through Strengthening Health, Social Services and Community Resilience in Belarus"	UNFPA	2021-2023	Funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Health, the Belarus Red Cross	1,000,000	
3	Improving access to quality medical services and reducing barriers to telehealth access for residents of remote areas through piloting telemedicine consultations, including in the field of reproductive health, based on a rural medical outpatient clinic in one of the regions of the country and developing recommendations for the government to create favorable eco-environment for the development of telemedicine at the regional level	UNFPA	2021	To be mobilized (MPTF funding proposal) 22,000 secured (in-kind)	Ministry of Health and health care institutions,); businesses and, experts	247,000	225,000
2	Support smallholders and most vulnerable farming rural households to meet emerging needs from the direct and indirect effects of COVID-19 pandemic with cash transfer programmes and specific support packages to support and diversify their agricultural production, and at the same time to improve the food security and nutrition of the family	FAO	Estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Agriculture and Food	1,000,000	1,000,000
2	Technical assistance to the Government of the Republic of Belarus for the development of a system to collect data on food consumption and cost of	FAO	Estimated timeline: 24 months.	Earmarked USD 40,000 from FAO technical cooperation programme.	Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Forestry	100,000	60,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	diets and to monitor purchasing power of vulnerable population.		Indicative start date Jan 2021	Negotiations on going with concerned Belarus authorities			
3	Strengthen national capacities in monitoring and identifying COVID-19 implications along the agri-food value chains and conduct an impact assessment of the pandemic on the agri-food value chain. Support the authorities of Belarus in enhancing and maintaining a price a market information system for agriculture and food commodities. Strengthen institutional capacities in agricultural planning and in developing robust and flexible evidence-based policy strategies to deal with short-term shocks/risks (such as COVID-19) and long-term market uncertainties.	FAO	Estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funding secured USD 70000 . Additional USD 30,000 to be confirmed	Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Forestry	280,000	180,000
3	Support the alignment of the national phytosanitary system and legislative frameworks of Belarus with international standards and agreements to increase export of plants and plant products.	FAO	Estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Donor identified: Funds not yet secured. negotiations on going with donor and Belarus authorities.	Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Forestry, phytosanitary services	100,000	100,000
3	Supporting a review of the food safety control system to identify areas for improvement, and actions to continually strengthen a coordinated, system for official food control; Support analysis of food safety import requirements in different markets, in particular to identify new markets opportunities for the meat and dairy sectors and strengthen knowledge on measures required; FAO will conduct trainings to strengthen laboratory management capacity and technical capacity of laboratory personnel for testing and analysis of food.	FAO	Estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funds mobilized.	Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Health, food safety authorities	200,000	
3	Support agriculture SME to decrease their dependency on external farm inputs particularly medicine and feed, fertilizers and pesticides by improving crop and animal husbandry practices in	FAO	Estimated timeline: 24 months.	Funds to be mobilized Seed funding from FAO in the pipeline(USD 100,000)	Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Forestry	800,000	700,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	respect of the environment and increase resilience to COVID-19 economic shock.		Indicative start date Jan 2021				
3	Support smallholder farmers to reduce their need for antimicrobial use and thus prevention the development of antimicrobial resistance by improving animal health and disease.	FAO	Ongoing	Funds mobilized	Ministry of Agriculture and Food	300,000	
3	Support agriculture SME to increase and diversify their market opportunities by adding value to primary agricultural products; enhance export opportunities by creating umbrella brands for food products. Strengthening local food markets that have been disrupted by the COVID-19 containment measures with high value products that characterize agro and ecotourism.	FAO	Estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funds to be mobilized Seed funding from FAO in the pipeline (USD 100,000)	Ministry of Agriculture and Food	700,000	600,000
3	Strengthening advisory and extensions services on food production and marketing, especially targeting small holders and SMEs. Develop a digital agriculture strategy and data analysis capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. It will support the digitalization of extension services and develop digital skills in agriculture and rural development for farmers, youth and women.	FAO	Estimated timeline: 24 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funds to be mobilized Seed funding from FAO in the pipeline (USD 90,000)	Ministry of Agriculture and Food	800,000	710,000
3	Strengthening capacities at national and decentralized level in promoting women's entrepreneurship in rural areas, improve the knowledge of specialists on gender issues, and provide them with the opportunity to make appropriate adjustments to the socio-economic development plans for rural areas. Support women entrepreneurship in agriculture production, produce processing and commercialization.	FAO	Estimated timeline: 36 months. Indicative start date Jan 2021	Funds to be mobilized Seed funding from FAO in the pipeline(USD 60,000)	Ministry of Agriculture and Food	1,000,000	940,000
3	Enhancing national capacities to develop and implement energy efficiency standards for buildings	UNECE	3-4-year project to be launched on 2021	XB project (funded by Germany)	Department for Energy Efficiency of the State Committee on Standardization	3,000,000	3,000,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
3	Capacity-building workshop on data solutions for evidence-based policy and stakeholder collaboration to improve energy efficiency in buildings	UNECE	Second half of 2021	XB funds / regular budget	Department for Energy Efficiency of the State Committee on Standardization	25,000	10,000
4	Assistance for finalizing the legal reforms on SEA and transboundary EIA	UNECE	2020	XB secured	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	30,000	
5	Support to implementation of selected targets set under the Protocol on Water and Health	UNECE/WHO Regional Office for Europe	2020-2022	Funds to be mobilized	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	30,000	30,000
5	Evidence-based policies to achieve Sustainable Development Goals: sustainable housing and urban development and innovative financing of smart sustainable cities project under the project "Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in selected countries in the UNECE Region"	UNECE	2020 - 2023	UNDA project (core funds)	Ministry of Architecture and Construction	70,000	
3	Training of some 30 plus women owners/managers of MSMEs in identifying, understanding and taking advantage of regulatory and procedural practices in foreign trade in Belarus and stock taking to develop evidence-based processes in using procurement systematically to promote and enable experimentation with new ideas, find new ways to recover sustainably and be competitive on international markets (including EAEU markets)	UNECE	2021	Funds to be mobilized (MPTF) 30,000 USD secured (in-kind, staff time)	Ministry of Economy, State Committee on Science and Technology Chambers of Commerce	130,000	100,000
3	Survey on how the COVID-19 safety measures and economic crisis is affecting MSMEs. Under the project "Strengthening the national capacities of the UNECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve the SDGs"	UNECE	August – December 2020	Secured funding from UNDA (core funds)	Ministry of Economy	15,000	

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
3	Study on “Women entrepreneurship in natural resource management: Challenges and opportunities for the MSME sector in the post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery”	UNECE	August-December 2020	Secured (core funds)	The State Committee for Standardization (Gosstandart)	10,000	
4	Project on digital trade facilitation, creating a pilot digital East-West and Black to Baltic Sea corridor.	UNECE	July to end of 2021	UNDA project on transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics. (core funds)	Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade	50,000	
3	Online/digital training tools; helping SMEs shape recovery and business development plans	UNECE	2021	Funds to be mobilized	In cooperation with the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce through a series of issue-specific thematic online events		70'000
3	PPP projects development in Belarus (Identify and select 8 infrastructure projects in Belarus to be developed as People-first PPPs in compliance with the SDGs (in terms of providing access and equity, are economically effective and fiscally sustainability, and are replicable, resilient and environmentally sustainable with the involvement of all stakeholders)	UNECE	2021-2022	Core Funds	Ministry of Economy	100,000	.
3	Gap analysis of the circular economy. The project will support Belarus and other selected beneficiary countries in accelerating the transition towards a Circular Economy in key target areas, including traceability of products along international value chains; sustainable public procurement; the management of waste.	UNECE	2021-2022	UNDA Accelerating the transition towards a circular economy in the UNECE region (core funds)	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Housing and Communal Services (TBC)	50,000	
All pillars	Strengthening national SDG data capacities through expanding the National SDGs Reporting Platform, which is a valuable user-friendly tool for the SDG monitoring, by developing a module for data disaggregation at the regional level. Such module will contribute to monitoring and assessment of the	UNECE	2021-2022	Subject to resource mobilization	National Statistical Committee (Belstat),		20,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	regional divide, specifically in light of COVID-19 socio-economic impact.						
1	Procurement of PPEs, wireless medical thermometers for the State Border Committee, State Customs Committee, Ministry of Internal Affairs, NGO partners, including regional branches of the Red Cross Society, vulnerable migrants, victims of trafficking in human beings	IOM	Completed from March to July 2020	EU-funded project “Helping Belarus address the phenomenon of increasing numbers of irregular migrants” (10,300 USD) Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway project “Regional Programme against human trafficking” (11,155 USD) EU-funded project “Introduction of an automated intelligent video-control system at road border crossing point Novaya Huta - Novi Yarilovychi at the Belarus-Ukraine frontier” (8,380 USD); USAID (3,628 USD)	Ministry of the Internal Affairs, State Border Committee, State Customs Committee, the Red Cross Society	33,463	
1	1) IOM supports the provision of consultation services to vulnerable migrants through strengthening capacities of a nationwide hotline on safe migration and travel administered by the Organization’s NGO partners “Business Women Club”. (initiative title - Raising awareness of vulnerable migrants on COVID-19 implications for migration and travel through enhanced operations of a tollfree nationwide hotline on safe migration and travel). 2) IOM has also developed and will disseminate guidelines for partner NGOs on protecting VoTs during COVID-19. The guidelines include provisions on the usage of PPEs and target VoTs.	IOM	Ongoing since March 2020	Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway project “Regional Programme against human trafficking”	Ministry of Internal Affairs	9,500	Up to 100,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
1	IOM plans to identify health needs of returned, transit and labour migrants, monitoring and further referral to relevant health care establishments – funding not secured	IOM	Concept note developed	Budget not secured yet	Ministry of Health		100,000
1	IOM facilitates stay of most vulnerable migrants in Belarus till flights are resumed under the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme (AVRR). (Implementation of the Assisted voluntary Return and Reintegration programme enrolling stranded migrants within the EU-funded project “Helping Belarus address the phenomenon of increasing numbers of irregular migrants”)	IOM	Ongoing	EU-funded project “Helping Belarus address the phenomenon of increasing numbers of irregular migrants” – USD 220,000	Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Border Committee	220,000-programme budget for 2018-2022, the donor agreed to spend it for COVID-19 related cases when need arises	
1	IOM implements an information campaign on COVID-19 precautions targeting Belarusians and foreign labour migrants and support services using IOM social media channels and Viber community with 38,000 users	IOM	Ongoing	IOM Development Fund project “Developing efficient public information system within the Border Guard Service of Belarus” – USD 2,000 EU-funded project “Enhancement of the security of Belarus-Ukraine border by contributing to the completion of the border demarcation process, X-ray complex installation and mobile application development” – USD 10,000 EU-funded project “Helping Belarus address the phenomenon of increasing	State Border Committee, NGO partners	13,200	

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
				numbers of irregular migrants” – USD 1,200			
1	IOM provides information on country-specific COVID-19 prevention practices and safety recommendations to AVRR returnees upon return to Belarus & to sending IOM Missions prior to return	IOM	Ongoing	In-kind	NGO partners		
1	IOM has produced and disseminated information leaflets for victims of human trafficking on the use of PPEs and COVID-19 safety recommendations	IOM	Completed	Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway project “Regional Programme against human trafficking”	NGO partners	753	
2	IOM provides rehabilitation and reintegration support, including psychological counselling, to victims of human trafficking through the continued operations of the IOM-run Rehabilitation centre, small grants to NGOs	IOM	Ongoing (till the end of 2020)	Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway project “Regional Programme against human trafficking” USAID-funded project “Counter-trafficking in Persons: Belarus”	Ministry of Internal Affairs	153,353	
3	IOM developed a long-term reintegration programme containing early recovery solutions for returned Belarusian labour migrants to stimulate launching of income-generating activities, conduct necessary trainings on SMEs development, complete a labour market assessment of the COVID-19 impact on returning labour migrants and introduce a labour market information system.	IOM	Concept note developed, funding is pending, Letter of support received.	Subject to resource mobilization	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection		900,000
3	Jointly with UNCT Agencies IOM will conduct a survey on the needs of homeless and former convicts with a focus on women and older people and identifies whether there are any migrants and VoTs among the target group.	IOM	Concept note developed	pending funding from the UK Embassy in Belarus			30,000
4	IOM plans to provide emergency training for border officials on detection, screening, registration, isolation and referral of ill travelers, develop relevant	IOM	2021 (subject to funding)	funding not secured yet	State Border Committee		300,000

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
	SOPs, support to active surveillance, including health screening, referral and data collection at POEs.						
4	IOM and La Strada has launched the information campaign targeting labor migrants (both Belarusians working abroad and foreigners working in Belarus - namely citizens of China and Uzbekistan) to increase their awareness of labor rights in the context of COVID-19.	IOM	Ongoing	USAID-funded project "Counter-trafficking in Persons: Belarus" – USD 23,000	Ministry of Internal Affairs, NGO partners	36,400	Funding gap up to 100,000
4	IOM completed a needs assessment among returning Belarusian labor migrants and foreign labor migrants in Belarus on risks and vulnerabilities related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including risks of human trafficking, the results of which will be used as a basis for future assistance programmes and communication activities. The assessment targeted the following groups: 1) labor migrants from Azerbaijan, China, Lithuania, Turkey, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Ukraine in Belarus with a special focus on assistance such as health services, information, cash assistance for food/shelter, or return to countries of origin; 2) Belarusian labor migrants who due to COVID-19 restrictions lost or terminated their employment abroad and had to return to Belarus.	IOM	Completed	Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway project "Regional Programme against human trafficking" – USD 22,000	Ministry of Internal Affairs, NGO partners	22,000	
5	IOM in partnership with the WHO Country Office piloted the 1st in a series of online trainings on protecting vulnerable migrants and victims of human trafficking in the COVID-19 context.	IOM	Ongoing	In-kind support	NGOs	n/a	n/a
5	IOM conducts online consultations for returning migrants, stranded migrants and other IOM beneficiaries with further referral to relevant national bodies. – ongoing	IOM	Ongoing	EU-funded project "Helping Belarus address the phenomenon of increasing numbers of irregular migrants" In-kind support	Ministry of Internal Affairs, NGOs	n/a	n/a

Pillar	Project	Agency	Timeline	Funding source	Ministry focal point	Total budget (USD)	Funding gap (USD to be mobilized)
1	UNHCR developed information materials tailored for its PoCs (in English, Russian, Arabic, Dari and Farsi) on COVID-19 with basic information regarding the infection, preventative measures, contact details where to seek help etc. They were distributed electronically and in printed version throughout the country by UNHCR partners	UNHCR	March – May 2020	Annual programme	n/a	n/a	
1	UNHCR in cooperation with UNFPA developed information materials tailored to its PoCs (in English, Russian, Arabic and Farsi) on prevention of domestic violence during the pandemic. They were distributed electronically and through implementing partners via messengers to women and girls among PoCs.	UNHCR	June 2020	Annual programme	n/a	n/a	
1	UNHCR conducted a mass SMS distribution to its PoCs with key information regarding COVID-19, in particular where to seek assistance through all three major mobile providers in Belarus.	UNHCR	July 2020	Annual programme	n/a	n/a	
1	UNHCR procured self-protective measures (masks, alcohol-based sanitizers) and distributed to partners and its PoCs (through the implementing partners) in all regions of the city.	UNHCR	April-December 2020	Annual programme	n/a	6,560	
5	Making Cities Resilient Campaign	UNDRR	December 2020 – April 2021	Mobilized	Local municipalities (to be identified)	30,000	
4	Joint-SDG Fund proposal on public finance reform	UNDP, UNICEF UNFPA, UN Women	October 2020- June 2022	Joint SDG Fund	Ministry of Finance	993,104	
1, 2, 5	Joint Programme on Recovering Better through Strengthening Health, Social Services and Community Resilience in Belarus	UNDP WHO UNICEF UNFPA	February 2021- January 2024	European Union	Local municipalities (to be identified)	4,700,000	

ANNEX II

List of Government Measures

Belarus did not apply any stringent measures with regards COVID-19. During the first weeks of the outbreak (the first case was reported on 28 February), there was no lockdown or nationwide quarantine, movement within the country was not restricted, and classes in schools and universities continued, although some schedule changes were introduced to reduce traffic load in the rush hours⁵⁵. Macroeconomic constraints may have guided overall policy, as the economy faces significant challenge that will reduce growth during 2020. Still, with the evolution of the epidemic situation, some social and economic measures began to be implemented to mitigate the impact of COVID⁵⁶. The timeline of measures been undertaken was follows:

Measures undertaken since 1 May 2020

- ❑ Decree No.178 on temporary measures to support employers and certain categories of citizens was issued on 28 May with the goal to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the Belarusian economy and ensure social stability. As part of the decree employers will be able to apply for subsidies to raise salaries of their employees up to the legislated minimum if the enterprise is forced to part-time employment or to stand idle from 1 May through 31 July. The subsidies will also be available for paying dues to the state social security fund. The decree also extends the period of availability through 31 August of individualized state support in the form of monthly allowances for citizens, whose allowances are to expire in May-July 2020. Municipal government agencies will be the ones to decide on granting subsidies or not while the money will be disbursed by the state social security fund.⁵⁷
- ❑ Decree No.179 on labor remuneration was issued on 28 May with the goal to enhance the social security of public sector workers and ensure the steady operation of public sector organizations and certain (overseas) institutions amid the pandemic. The decree provides for keeping public sector salaries at least as large as the legislated minimum. Subsidies will be granted to public sector organizations if they are forced to part-time employment or to stand idle. The central state budget and budgets of municipal authorities have been identified as a possible source to finance expenses of public sector organizations if their earnings from income-generating activities are insufficient.⁵⁸
- ❑ *Tax reduction for individual entrepreneurs.* In line with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 143, Regional Councils of Deputies decided to half single tax rates for individual entrepreneurs and individuals during the second and third quarters of 2020 in all regions except for the city of Minsk.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ However, since April 2020, the authorities of Vitebsk region have witnessed a worsening epidemiological situation and undertook more restrictive measures.

⁵⁶ According to the Minsk city executive committee, around 1600 companies and entrepreneurs have applied for support, with almost 70% of applications concerning the possibility of rent holidays on real estate leased from the state. 877 applications have already been approved. <https://pronalogi.by/news/poryadka-1-6-tys-subektov-khozyaystvovaniya-uzhe-obratilis-v-minskiy-gorispolkom-za-podderzhkoy/> (accessed 20 June 2020)

⁵⁷ https://www.belarus.by/en/government/events/presidential-decrees-signed-to-support-working-belarusians-amid-pandemic_i_113565.html (accessed 12 June 2020)

⁵⁸ https://www.belarus.by/en/government/events/presidential-decrees-signed-to-support-working-belarusians-amid-pandemic_i_113565.html (accessed 12 June 2020)

⁵⁹ <https://sputnik.by/economy/20200522/1044739997/Stavki-edinogo-naloga-dlya-IP-i-fizlizts-vdvoe-snizyat-v-Minskoy-oblasti.html> <https://sputnik.by/economy/20200521/1044734194/Stavki-edinogo-naloga-dlya-IP-Grodnenschiny-vdvoe-snizili-iz-za-koronavirusa.html> (accessed 22 May 2020)

- ❑ *Administrative facilitation.* On 19 May, the President signed a Decree that provides the extension of certificates and documents issued to individuals and legal entities (including individual entrepreneurs), which expire from April 30 to July 31, 2020, for three months. The document was adopted in order to reduce the administrative burden on citizens during the implementation of measures for the prevention of COVID-19⁶⁰.
- ❑ *Social support.* On May 18th, 2020, the President issued Decree 171 on “Social Support for Specific Categories of Individuals”⁶¹. The Decree eased access to pensions on disability and to regular pensions for the parents of children with disabilities. This Decree stipulates a longer period of public targeted social support to multi-child families in the form of a monthly social benefit which is extended up to 12 months (now this period makes up to 6 months), as well as higher means-testing from 100% to 115% of the minimum subsistence budget (MSB) per capita which is used to appoint such benefit (increased to 283.80 Belarusian roubles, or 117.5 USD, from the current amount of 246.78 Belarusian rubles, or 102.1 USD). These measures will enter into force from September 1, 2020. In addition, the Decree also provides for changes in the calculation of seniority for disabled people and mothers with four children, in the calculation of social insurance and pensions, which will enter into force as of 1 January 2021.
- ❑ *Financial incentives for Social service staff.* On May 18th, 2020, the President signed the Decree “On Financial Incentives for Staff Members of the Organizations Providing Social Services”, which stipulates additional payments for staff members of the public social support institutions working with persons who have infectious diseases and their first contacts who are not admitted to health institutions by medical indications. These additional fees are paid to staff members working in the rotating scheme. The amount of the additional stipends depends on the category of the employee and the frequency of their contact with the infected persons and vary between 250 and 1500 Belarusian roubles.⁶²
- ❑ *Rental discounts for lease of state-owned land.* Decisions to reduce the price for rental of state-owned land during the second and third quarters of 2020 for certain categories of leaseholders were made in all regions except for Gomel region.⁶³

Measures undertaken during April 2020

- ❑ *Economic measures to support the economy.* On 24 April, Presidential Decree No. 14 On Support to Economy was approved. The Decree addresses fiscal, labour, social, procurement, monitoring, and business regulation issues, as follows:
 - ✓ *Fiscal incentives:* The decree enables tax holidays and payment by installment for credits against tax for certain activities⁶⁴. The time for the reimbursement of excess total VAT sum

⁶⁰ <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32000172&p1=1> (accessed 20 May 2020)

⁶¹ <http://pravo.by/novosti/novosti-pravo-by/2020/may/50534/> (accessed 20 May 2020)

⁶² The rotating scheme means working for 14 days continuously not leaving the institution. The staff members stay continuously together with patients in such 24-hour institution, providing the required support to them. <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32000169&p1=1&p5=0> (accessed 20 May 2020)

⁶³ <https://sputnik.by/economy/20200519/1044710720/Arendnuyu-platu-za-zemelnye-uchastki-umenshat-yurlitsam-v-Minsk-om-rayone.html> (accessed 22 May 2020)

⁶⁴ Annex 1 of the Decree includes the list of Economic Activities Most Exposed to the Adverse Impact of the Epidemiological Situation that are eligible for fiscal and other exemptions, in line with the Code of the National Classification of the Republic of Belarus OKRB 005-2011 "Types of Economic Activity". The categories of activities include: Human Health (medical care institutions activities, activities of therapeutic resorts with services of medical workers); Arts, Sports, Entertainment And Recreation; Creative, Arts And Entertainment Activities (creative, arts and entertainment activities, performing arts, support activities to performing arts operation of arts facilities); Libraries, Archives, Museums And Other Cultural Activities (library and archives activities, museum activities, operation of historical sites and buildings and similar visitor attractions, botanical and zoological gardens, nature reserves, national parks and wildlife reserves activities); Physical Culture And Sports Activities, Amusement And Recreation Activities (physical

paid was reduced. Flexibility was introduced to self-employed businessmen to be able to switch to other taxation schemes when temporarily out of business. The decree introduces rent payment holidays, a moratorium on raising the base rent amount and raising the actual size of rent for State owned property. Legal persons and self-employed businessmen, who own properties, are advised to give rent relief to their tenants and to reduce the size of rent depending on the earnings of their tenants. Apart from that, municipal authorities have been authorized to reduce property taxes. Organizations will be able to change their tax accounting scheme for currency exchange differences one time during 2020, and the scheme will stay in effect for the duration of the entire fiscal period.

- ✓ *Labour policy*: with the goal to secure employment and increase workforce mobility, the minimal period of time for the employer to warn employees about forthcoming substantial changes of working conditions (without reducing their salaries) has been reduced. The period of time, during which employees can be reassigned to another job due to the unfavorable epidemiological situation or in order to substitute for a missing employee, has been extended to three months.
- ✓ *Social security*. The decree authorizes payment of temporary incapacity benefits to persons responsible of kids 10 years old and below, who go to kindergartens or schools, if the kid is a first-tier or second-tier contact of a coronavirus patient.
- ✓ *Procurement*. To allow the government to promptly and flexibly respond to the worsening of the epidemiological situation, the government has been authorized to introduce temporary procedures for government purchases if necessary. In order to simplify government procurement procedures, customers can buy assets from one source (as much as needed to satisfy their needs for two months) if the contract with the previous supplier has been terminated. Suppliers who fail to meet their commitments and are forced to terminate the contract due to objective, *force majeure*, reasons, will not be included into the registry of banned suppliers.
- ✓ *Arrears for payment of energy resources*. Arrears in foreign currency for payment of energy resources (natural gas, electric and thermal energy) that are not paid as at 31 December 2019 and for which deferrals (payments by installments) were granted, are subject to revaluation and payment at the exchange rate of the Belarusian ruble set by the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus as at 31 December 2020 for the foreign currency in which payment for energy sources was made.
- ✓ *Licensing was facilitated for pharmaceutical companies* to engage in retail sales of pharmaceutical products on the list of over-the-counter pharmaceutical products approved by the Ministry of Health.
- ✓ *Antimonopoly regulation*. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, and the State Committee for Standardization have been authorized to suspend for up to 90 days the operation of retail facilities and public catering facilities if violations are detected with regard to the legislation on prices and pricing, trade and public catering, consumer rights protection, advertising and legislation in the area of sanitary and

culture and sports activities, operation of physical culture and sports facilities, activities of sports clubs, fitness facilities, other physical culture and sports activities, amusement and recreation activities); Other Service Activities, Repair Of Computers And Personal And Household Goods (repair of computers and communications equipment, repair of personal and household goods, repair of consumer electronics, repair of household appliances and home and garden equipment, repair of footwear and leather goods, repair of furniture and home furnishings, repair of watches, clocks and jewelry, repair of other personal and household goods); and Other Personal Service Activities (washing, dry-cleaning and dyeing of textile and fur products, hairdressing and other beauty treatment, physical well-being activities).

epidemiological well-being of the population as well as on compliance with the requirements of technical regulations of the Customs Union of the Eurasian Economic Union.

- ❑ *Incentives for the use of electricity in residential households.* On 14 April, the President signed Decree No. 127 “On reimbursement of electricity supply costs for the housing stock”. The rule encourages households to switch energy supply of single-family houses to electricity for heating, hot water and cooking. Municipal budgets will be used to reimburse some of the money such a conversion will require. The government will compensate 20 per cent of the conversion cost (up to 40 base amounts).
- ❑ *Incentives for healthcare workers.* A Decree No. 131 was approved that introduces additional monthly salary bonuses for working in conditions relating to contagious diseases. In particular, the decree targets healthcare workers that provide medical aid to patients with infections as well as those, who work in conditions involving infections. In healthcare organizations that provide medical care to patients on an outpatient basis and in the Republican Center for the Organization of Medical Response, the monthly allowance for doctors will be Br1 thousand, for medical workers with secondary specialized medical education - Br500, for other employees - Br300.⁶⁵
- ❑ *In-kind food/vouchers schemes.* On April 6, 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection informed that the social services are ready to provide support to elderly people and people with disabilities and to deliver foods and medicines. This support is provided by social workers and volunteers through the territorial centres of social protection of population. Belarus has 146 such centres, located in every district of the country. The number of people living alone and people with disabilities is about 830,000, including almost 160,000 persons who have no close relatives.⁶⁶
- ❑ *Issuing of Self-isolation rules.* The Government published self-isolation rules (corresponding Council of Ministers’ Resolution No.208 of 8 April 2020⁶⁷) for persons who test positive or had had first or second level contact with infected persons. According to the rules, infected persons and first-level contacts need to self-isolate for 14 days following the date of the last contact with the infected individual. Second-level contacts are required to self-isolate with the appearance of symptoms (cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, fever). Doctors may decide on prolonging self-isolation time. The self-isolating persons are not allowed to leave their homes for work and studies, leisure, travel or attend any mass gatherings. The only exceptions are for emergency visits to the nearest shop or drugstore, and to remove household waste. When leaving home, such people need to wear a face mask and avoid contact with other people. People who work and pay fees to the Social Protection Fund (or such fees are paid by their employers) are eligible for sick-leave benefits during the period of self-isolation. The Resolution mandates that if a person breaks the self-isolation rules, he or she gets a 50 per cent deduction of the sick pay envisaged by the law.
- ❑ *A tender for reconstructing the M7 Minsk-Vilnius motorway will be opened in mid-April.* An international tender will call for reconstructing the M7 Minsk-Vilnius motorway (90 km long) and the border checkpoint Kamenny Log. The European Investment Bank has allocated funds for reconstructing the road. Work will begin in summer and is supposed to be finished by May 2021⁶⁸.
- ❑ *Business facilitation for manufacturing of masks.* The authorities of Minsk city district have offered their assistance to enterprises and entrepreneurs who can quickly organize the tailoring of to

⁶⁵ <https://www.belta.by/society/view/stali-izvestny-podrobnosti-ukaza-o-nadbavkah-medikam-ot-br300-do-br4-tys-ezhemesjachno-387686-2020> (accessed 17 April 2020)

⁶⁶ http://mintrud.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/-sotsialnaja-sluzhba-gotova-okazat-pomosch-odinokim-pozhilymnbsp-grazhdanam-i-invalidam-po-dostavke-produktov-pitanija-i-lekarstv-3459/ (accessed 10 April 2020)

⁶⁷ <http://www.pravo.by/novosti/novosti-pravo-by/2020/april/48734/> (accessed 9 April 2020)

⁶⁸ <https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-to-call-for-tenders-to-reconstruct-minsk-vilnius-motorway-in-mid-april-129642-2020/> (9 April 2020)

combat coronavirus. The decision applies to sewing enterprises, brands of clothing, underwear and accessories, as well as any legal entities and individual entrepreneurs who can organize the sewing of masks and personal protective equipment, production, packaging and delivery of disinfectants. Assistance can involve finding materials and concluding contracts for the supply of products to the retail network. There is a requirement that the profitability of the production of masks and other protective equipment should not be higher than 10%. If payment is being made at the expense of the State budget, the limit is 5%⁶⁹.

- ❑ *A plan containing social distancing measures was approved by the Minsk City Executive Committee.*, by decision No. 1069 of April 7. The plan provides for the continuation of outreach to the public. In addition, it is planned to take measures to prevent employees from working with signs of respiratory illness in organizations of all forms of ownership. It encourages the use of online meetings for companies, and bans some public events (e.g. in libraries, museums and exhibition halls). The plan provides that the territorial centers of social services for the population to meet the needs of the elderly in food, medicine, and protective equipment. In universities, colleges and vocational schools, it is recommended to exclude group classes and organize a process with elements of distance learning, training on individual schedules. In pre-school, parents have the option not to bring children. In restaurants, the minimum distance between the tables is now regulated (at least 1.5 meters). Workers at retail facilities are encouraged to use masks, gloves, and antiseptics to handle their hands⁷⁰.
- ❑ *National authorities expand price regulation of socially significant goods.* The authorities have expanded the list of socially significant goods for which prices are regulated. The list now includes, toilet paper, and diapers. This is provided for by Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 205.⁷¹
- ❑ *The State Audit Committee raised concerns on the limited supply of protective products.* The Committee monitored the presence of masks and respirators, antiseptics and certain drugs (paracetamol) in the pharmacy network of the regions and Minsk district. Of the 130 pharmacies, masks and respirators were available in only 33 (25%), alcohol-based antiseptics in 35 (27%), and paracetamol in 15 (11%). Consumers who reached the Committee through its hotlines also raised concerns on the high prices or absence of these products⁷².

⁶⁹ <https://news.tut.by/economics/679806.html> (accessed 8 April 2020)

⁷⁰ <https://reform.by/mingorispolkom-utverdil-plan-po-borbe-s-koronavirusom> (accessed 8 April 2020)

⁷¹ <https://finance.tut.by/news679504.html> (accessed 8 April 2020)

⁷² <https://people.onliner.by/2020/04/07/kgk-mask> (accessed 8 April 2020)

Measures undertaken between 6 March and 3 April

- ❑ *Financial regulatory easing.* The National bank first relaxed some prudential controls on commercial banks (since March 18, with more restrictions lifted on March 25). Whereas these measures will allow state-owned banks to have more freedom in financing large SOEs, their impact on lending to the private sector or smaller companies is less clear, as the latter is restricted firstly by the market considerations and risk perceptions of banks⁷³. The National bank has also introduced other measures to reduce the coronavirus spread, such as quarantining cash, and lifting the limits for touchless payments without need for PIN-code.
- ❑ *External financing.* The government became more active in seeking external funding. Deputy Prime Minister Krutoi announced talks on debt restructuring⁷⁴. Belarus is also engaged in talks with IMF about emergency funding through the IMF Rapid Financing Instrument⁷⁵.
- ❑ *Export bans.* A temporary ban on the export of certain types of staple foods was approved through Council of Ministers' decree No.185 of 31 March 2020. The list of goods that are subject to a temporary ban includes buckwheat, buckwheat groats, set onion, garden onion and garlic. The ban will be valid for the next three months and could be expanded⁷⁶.
- ❑ *Private sector relief.* After the numerous requests from the business community, the government announced that it is preparing a business support plan. The measures under considerations include tax, rent and debt repayment holidays for SMEs. Whereas no significant measures were announced so far, on April 2 the Prime Minister revealed that the Government would spend around 110 million rubles on support to the sectors that employ 550 000 people⁷⁷.
- ❑ *Lowering of export duties on oil and petroleum products.* On 1 April Belarus reduced customs duties on oil and petroleum products, which are exported beyond the customs territory of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).⁷⁸
- ❑ *Support to State owned enterprises.* On April 1 the government lifted the *directed lending limit* for 2020 by 200 million rubles. The funding would be channeled through the Development Bank to buy equipment and lease it to the agricultural enterprises. (initially the government planned to finish the directed lending practice by 2020, which now seems unlikely).
- ❑ *Price regulation of masks and disinfectants.* The Ministry of Anti-Monopoly Regulation and Trade introduced state regulation of prices on medical masks and disinfectants (antibacterial and decontaminating agents). The marginal rate of return has been established, which is used to determine the amount of profit to be included in the selling prices of manufacturers for respiratory protective equipment (masks intended for individual use) and disinfectant (antibacterial, disinfecting) products (including gels, sprays), in the amount of 10 percent. The maximum allowance of the importer for masks and disinfectants was determined in the amount of 10 percent, as well as the maximum allowance for trade (taking into account the wholesale allowance) to the

⁷³ The Board of the National Bank decided to apply a number of counter-cyclical measures aimed at increasing the ability of banks to maintain financial support to the real sector of the economy in the face of increased influence of external negative factors. In particular, until December 31, 2020, individual prudential requirements were relaxed with regards to the classification of assets exposed to credit risk. It also advised that profits of 2019 and retained earnings of previous years be kept in the reserve and charter funds and the non-payment of dividends to shareholders this year. <https://www.nbrb.by/press/10042> (accessed 2 April 2020)

⁷⁴ <https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-considering-restructuring-part-of-external-state-debt-129196-2020/> (accessed 2 April 2020)

⁷⁵ <http://www.nbrb.by/eng/press/10080> (accessed 2 April 2020)

⁷⁶ <https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-bans-export-of-some-staple-foods-129442-2020/> (accessed 2 April 2020)

⁷⁷ <https://news.tut.by/economics/678833.html> (accessed 2 April 2020)

⁷⁸ According to Council of Ministers' Resolution No.188 of 31 March 2020, <https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-raises-oil-export-duties-129446-2020/> (accessed 2 April 2020)

selling price of the manufacturer (importer) for masks and disinfectants in the amount of 15 percent.⁷⁹

- ❑ *Price controls.*, on April 1 the government resorted to administrative price controls. According to the government's resolution, the companies of any form or ownership should not increase prices more than by 0.5% per month. These measures were revoked on 17 April.
- ❑ *Bank operations and access to foreign exchange*⁸⁰. Banks have been advised of the inadmissibility of introducing unreasonable restrictions and (or) fees for banking operations, as well as when transferring foreign currency to accounts opened in different foreign currencies.
- ❑ *No social support measures* were announced so far. The plans of socio-economic development for the next five years still feature the \$100 billion GDP target, which was limited even before the COVID-19 shock.
- ❑ *Simplification of administrative procedures for migrants stranded in Belarus.* Due to the fact that a number of countries have imposed travel restrictions, the period of stay of migrants in Belarus was extended to 90 days. Since March 18, any migrant can apply to a local office of the Department of Citizenship and Migration at their place of stay and extend the registration for additional 90 days without regard to the duration of their stay in Belarus to date. As reported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, more than 300 foreigners have already asked for such an extension.
- ❑ *Pensions and communal service payments by post.* On March 25, 2020, "Belpochta" (Belarusian Post Office) announced that it provides pensions home-delivery service by post because of the coronavirus situation. Pensioners can also pay their communal services when they receive pensions/benefits⁸¹.

⁷⁹ https://www.mart.gov.by/news/price_control_mask (accessed 2 April 2020)

⁸⁰ <https://www.nbrb.by/news/10051> (accessed 2 April 2020)

⁸¹ <http://www.belpost.by/press-centre/news-company/5025.html> (accessed 10 April 2020)