



World Health
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION in
BELARUS





Welcome from the Regional Director

Welcome to WHO. Health is our most precious asset. WHO's goal is to ensure better health for everyone, everywhere. We touch people's lives –making sure the air we breathe, and the food and water we consume is safe; ensuring all have access to effective health systems; safeguarding the quality of medicines and vaccines; combatting diseases and protecting people from health threats. WHO works with governments, organizations, communities and individuals to promote health throughout our lives. We all benefit socially, economically and environmentally from a world that seeks health for all and nowhere is our work more critical than at country level. We look forward to working with you to make this our common goal.

Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab
WHO Regional Director for Europe

Who we are

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the global authority on public health within the United Nations. Founded in 1948, we collaborate with the governments of 194 Member States to ensure the highest attainable level of health for all. Currently, more than 7000 people work in 150 country offices, 6 regional offices and at the headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The Organization's work is guided by the principle that health is a human right, and we seek to extend universal health coverage, protect people from health emergencies and ensure that all people enjoy better health and well-being.

Belarus is a part of the WHO European Region, which comprises 53 countries: this Region covers a vast geographical area reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans. WHO staff in the Region are public health, scientific and technical experts, based in the Regional Office in Copenhagen, Denmark, in five technical centres and in country offices in 30 Member States.

WHO has worked at the national level with the Government of Belarus since the WHO Country Office was established in Minsk in April 1994. We endeavour to build a better, healthier future for the people of Belarus.

How we work

As part of the United Nations system, WHO's core function is to direct, coordinate and provide leadership on international health. We articulate ethical and evidence-based policy options, and set norms and standards, promoting and monitoring their implementation. WHO also stimulates the generation, translation and dissemination of knowledge, builds sustainable institutional capacity and monitors and assesses health trends. One of our core functions is to support emergency preparedness and response.

Working in countries, WHO plays an important role in advocating for health at the highest political level, communicating about important health issues and motivating actors across sectors to take action for better health. We bring partners together and lead among United Nations agencies working towards attaining the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Belarus the country team draws on the technical expertise of all three levels of the Organization. Our strong presence and capacity at country level ensures that our support is relevant and effective. WHO's global network also enables other countries to learn and benefit from the experiences and expertise in Belarus.

Partnerships and collaborations

As part of our role to direct and coordinate international health work, WHO promotes collaboration, mobilizes partnerships and galvanizes the efforts of different health actors to respond to national and global health challenges.

In Belarus our primary partner is the Ministry of Health. WHO is also an active member of the United Nations Country Team and we collaborate closely with national authorities and stakeholders beyond the Ministry of Health, as well as civil society organizations, health workers, academic institutions and other governments and international organizations.



Belarus in brief

Population size

9.4 million

75%
living in urban areas



Average life expectancy



68.8



79.2

Neonatal mortality rate

1.5

per 1000 live births

Top three health challenges in the country:

- 1** Too many people are dying prematurely from NCDs.
- 2** The existing health system must be modernized to make it more effective, efficient, safer and better able to respond to people's health needs.
- 3** Extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) remains a major health threat to hundreds of Belarusians, as well as a challenge to the health system.

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)
account for

89%

of all deaths

Message from the WHO Representative

In my role as the WHO Representative in Belarus, I have seen the importance of firmly rooting our work in country needs, making sure our collaboration with the government and other partners promotes better health for all. Belarus is committed to universal health coverage and to making sure that everyone, everywhere can access essential, quality health services without facing financial hardship. To achieve this goal, we must build an effective, people-centred health-care system that is equipped to meet the changing health needs of the population, without pushing people into poverty because of health costs.

Our WHO team in Belarus, supported by experts from our regional and global offices, are working side by side with the Ministry of Health and other partners to modernize the health system and to strengthen primary health care in the country. Only by taking action now can we create an integrated, equitable and high-quality service delivery system for future generations.

NCDs are killing too many people prematurely – that is before the age of 70 – in Belarus every year. We know that healthier lifestyles can help us reverse the growing trend of NCD-related deaths, morbidities and disabilities, but fighting NCDs goes far beyond the healthy choices an individual can make. All sectors of society must come together to address this complex health challenge and intersectoral cooperation is exactly what WHO is working towards and encouraging our national partners to prioritize as well.

Modernizing the Belarusian health system and gearing up for the long fight against NCDs are not processes we can complete within one or two years. One of the greatest strengths of our WHO country team is to be able to address the burning health issues of today, while also maintaining a long-term vision, helping the Government of Belarus to build a stable foundation to meet the health challenges of tomorrow.

In taking these steps towards a healthier future for Belarus, we are guided by the principles of the SDGs and Health 2020, the European policy framework for health and well-being. I am committed to working with the Government of Belarus to make all Belarusians healthier and happier, leaving no one behind.

Dr Batyr Berdyklychev
WHO Representative in Belarus



Бердыкыч

WHO – saving lives and ensuring health for all

Noncommunicable diseases

NCDs account for most of the disease burden in Belarus and also place a major financial strain on society. To effectively address NCDs, the country's primary health care system needs to be strengthened. One key measure is to introduce NCD prevention at the primary health care level to address behaviour risk factors, such as smoking, alcohol misuse, poor diets and physical inactivity. This reform will require a shift towards more comprehensive and efficient models of primary care and greater patient engagement and empowerment. Primary health care professionals will also need to adjust their practices to provide more patient-centred care and build their capacities to motivate patients to better manage their own health.

Thanks to funding from the European Union, WHO is supporting Belarus in making these aspirations

a reality. The United Nations–European Union project “Prevention of noncommunicable diseases, promotion of healthy lifestyles and support of the modernization of the health-care system in Belarus” has now been piloted in two regions and thanks to WHO's support, the first promising results can already be seen. Health professionals in the pilot facilities are now better prepared to prevent and manage the most common NCDs and are applying the key principles of patient-centred care. The expansion of areas of responsibility for doctors' assistants and nurses working in primary health care has been welcomed by the patients. Now nurses are able to provide counselling on NCD risk factors, and general practitioners' work is more efficient and focused on individual counselling to better match their patients' needs.



Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis

Belarus has recorded the highest-ever proportion in the world of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) among new cases. Also, among MDR-TB cases, a substantial share are pre-extensively drug resistant (pre-XDR) and extensively drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) cases.

Faced with this challenging situation, for many tuberculosis (TB) patients in Belarus, treatment plans with the latest available drugs have become the last and only possibility to fight the disease and survive.

Thanks to financial support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, treatment plans with new drugs became available in Belarus in 2015. Since then, over 700 patients with MDR-TB have started treatment. Extremely positive results have been recorded with an encouraging success rate of over 90%, compared to the 58% success rate seen in other MDR-TB patients who have not had access to the newest drugs.

WHO has provided continuous technical support to Belarus in introducing these new TB drugs and in developing national guidelines on the management of TB and MDR-TB, drug safety monitoring and the use of new drugs to treat TB. Through these measures, WHO has helped make sure sustainable, systemic changes go hand in hand with the introduction of new, life-saving treatment options.

The Global Fund will continue financial support to Belarus in the area of TB and HIV prevention and control during 2019–2021. However, there is a need to ensure adequate financing of these programmes after the Global Fund withdrawal.



Making our work possible

As Belarus works towards achieving the SDGs, investing in WHO will help protect and promote the health of the poorest and most disadvantaged.

In addition to WHO's regular budget, based on contributions from Member States, our work in Belarus is made possible thanks to contributions from the Global Fund, supporting MDR-TB control; the European Union, supporting the modernization of the health-care system; the European Union and the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, providing financial support in the area of NCD prevention and control; the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), cofinancing activities on HIV prevention and control; and the Government of Japan, funding activities to promote universal health coverage.

However, to continue improving the health of the people of Belarus, WHO requires additional support.

Significant **funding gaps** exist for long-term health priorities. These include:

- the modernization of the health-care system to ensure safe and high-quality services
- NCD prevention and control through an intersectoral approach
- the optimization of health services financing mechanisms to make them sustainable, efficient and also affordable for the population.

Globally, WHO is transforming to make the Organization more effective and efficient, placing country work even more at its centre. Predictable and flexible funding from our partners for global, regional and country level priorities will be crucially important to our success. A full breakdown of the financing and implementation progress in Belarus can be found on the WHO Programme Budget Portal:

<http://open.who.int/2018-19/home>



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