



Country Briefing

on State of the Environment

Information in the Republic of Belarus



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Overall aim and specific objectives of the Country Briefing

The overall aim of the Country Briefing is to provide an overview of and make accessible state of environment information available at the country level.

More specifically, Country Briefing has three objectives:

- To provide interested parties with comparable, accurate and timely information on the environmental status in the six Eastern Partnership Countries of the ENI SEIS II East project that provides useful input into national environmental policy debates in international context.
- To demonstrate country performance and enable the user/reader to compare countries with other Eastern Partnership Countries.
- To share good experience in the field of environmental assessment, information and environmental protection.

Methodological approach to the Country Briefing preparation

The methodological approach is based on the approach used in the preparation of The European environment state and outlook report 2015 (SOER 2015) – Part Countries and regions and is slightly modified in relation to the needs of the ENI SEIS II East project.

The Country Briefings are presented in interactive online versions at the website of the ENI SEIS II East project. Each Country Briefing contains separate sections to address the four main topics:

Main themes and sectors addressed in the national State of Environment report

The purpose of this part is to provide an introduction to the national SOER and understanding of its structure as well as the main topics that are addressed in the report. The text addresses the legal requirement and frequency of the national SOER, methodological basis and use of indicators, structure of the report, overview of main themes addressed in the report and provides links to additional underlying information (e.g. national indicator system, additional reports if relevant, etc.). Suggested length: up to 250 words.

Key findings of the State of Environment report/ Key finding of the state of the environment

The purpose of this part is to provide brief overview of the state of the environment in the country. It provides a summary of the key messages as well as key findings within the topics addressed in the latest national SOE report. Suggested length: up to 800 words.

Notice: *By mutual agreement with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova, the latest available official data on the environment was used for summary evaluations.*

Main policy responses to key environmental challenges and concerns

The purpose of this part is to reflect on the state of the environment in the wider national context, focusing on the main challenges, environmental concerns and existing policies addressing these challenges/concerns in the country. In this part there are also highlighted policy responses to improve the state of the environment. Suggested length: up to 500 words.

Country specific issues

The purpose of this part is to provide an opportunity to highlight country specific issues addressed in the SOE report or in relevant adopted policies, including emerging issues and how countries are dealing with them and, innovative policies supporting long term transition towards a more sustainable society in the country. The aim is to help to identify interesting developments and innovative approaches that could be an interest for other Eastern Partnership Countries. This includes the environmental political agenda; green economy, forward looking information and scenarios, regional issues etc. The suggestions mentioned below are based on the discussions during the country visit. Suggested length: up to 500 words.

Main themes and sectors addressed in the national State of Environment report (SOER)

The SOER of the Republic of Belarus is published every four years by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of the Republic of Belarus (Ministry) in accordance with the 2008 Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 734. The last report available in Russian was published in 2015¹.

The content of the SOE Report consists of following chapters:

The quality of the environment and the state of natural resources

- Air quality
- Climate change and ozone layer change
- Surface and ground water
- Soil
- Biodiversity
- Natural resources
- Protected areas
- Waste
- Radiation situation

Impact of production activity on the environment

- Industry
- Transport
- Energy
- Agriculture
- Housing and utilities
- Emergencies of anthropogenic and natural character

Ecological situation in the regions

Environmental policy measures and state regulation of nature management and environmental protection.

Ministry is responsible for publishing **Ecological Bulletin “The State of the Natural Environment of Belarus”** which is published annually since 2003². Ecological Bulletin contains the systematized information on state of natural environment in the current year. The various characteristics of natural resources and the level their contamination are also considered.

Since 2010, Belarus uses a system of core environmental indicators. 34 indicators divided into 8 thematic groups are available on the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat) webpage. **The statistical book Environmental protection in the Republic of Belarus** is published annually and presents the data on the state of the natural environment and environmental impact of economic activities³.

¹ http://www.minpriroda.gov.by/ru/press_sluzhba-ru/view/podgotovlen-proekt-natsionalnogo-doklada-o-sostojanii-okruzhajuschej-sredy-respubliki-belarus-1720/

² <http://www.minpriroda.gov.by/ru/ecoza2015/>

³ <http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/ofitsialnaya-statistika/macro-economy-and-environment/okruzhayuschaya-sreda/>

Key findings of the State of Environment

The economy of the **Republic of Belarus** is characterised by its' relative stability. Until 2009, Belarus' economy had a strong 9.6% annual average GDP growth. Since 2009, the annual average growth dropped to 3.2%.

Emissions of air pollutants between 2010 and 2014 slightly increased (by 2%). Emissions from stationary sources in 2014 amounted to 34.4% against 28.6% in 2010 of the total number of emissions. The share of emissions from mobile sources was 65.6% in 2014, compared to 71.4% in 2010. In this period, only carbon monoxide emissions tend to increase (2010 - 75.1 thousand tons, 2014 - 80.9 thousand tons). Solid particles generally have a tendency to a smooth decrease in emissions from 44.3 to 34.9 thousand tons. In 2014, the industry (including energy) accounted for an average of 65% of total emissions of pollutants from stationary sources. The next most important source is agriculture, whose contribution to total emissions was 26%. Each of the other branches of the economy accounts for less than 5%.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions decreased by 55.1% when the years 2014 and 1990 are compared. GHG emissions increased from 84.2 million tons in 2005 to 86 million tons in 2014 (excluding absorption of carbon dioxide in the category „Land use, land use change and forestry“). The greatest amount of greenhouse gases is allocated in the energy sector - 62.4% and in the agriculture sector - 24.8%. GHG emissions in the sectors waste and industrial processes are 7.9% and 4.8% of the total national emissions.

According to the results of stationary observations in 2014, **the content of pollutants in the atmospheric air** of most of the monitored cities of Belarus was below the limit values. Despite the limit values of selected air pollutants (PM₁₀, formaldehyde, NO₂) at several monitoring stations were exceeded.

In 2014, **the total amount of abstracted water** fell by 11.48% compared to 2005. This drop in water abstraction was mainly caused by the 36.90% decrease in the amount of water provided for drinking and domestic purposes.

The volume of total **wastewater discharges** diminished by 18.07% between 2005 and 2014.

The overall **water supply and wastewater service coverage** has shown steady growth over the last several years. In 2014, the coverage of the urban population served by a centralized water supply system reached almost 98% and the coverage of the rural areas reached almost 71%. Centralized sewerage coverage in urban areas was 92%, in rural areas 62% are not connected to centralized sewerage.

Chemical analyzes of **groundwater and artesian water** samples in 2014 were carried out on 258 wells, 125 wells per groundwater, and 133 wells per artesian well. An analysis of the results of studies of the hydro chemical composition of groundwater has shown that 74.4% of groundwater samples and 82.7% of samples of artesian waters correspond to adopted norm.

Surface water quality shows a steady improving trend. In 2014, surface water monitoring was carried out at 300 points of observation. In the water samples, 34 basic indicators were determined. According to the Water Pollution Index used in the Republic of Belarus for the interpretation of hydro chemical data, the state of water bodies in the country as a whole is estimated as quite safe. 90.7% of observation points in 2014 were characterized by good water quality (I and II categories, „clean“ and „relatively clean“) and 9.3% - satisfactory (category III, „moderately polluted“).

In terms of the share of **arable land per person** (0.60 ha) and **agricultural land** in total (0.91 ha), the Republic of Belarus is among the first 20 countries in the world. Of all the types of land degradation typical for Belarus, water and wind erosion is most pronounced in agricultural lands, which was manifested in 2013 on an area of 556.5 thousand hectares (6.3%).

In 2014, the system of **specialty protected nature areas** included 1 231 objects (share of protected areas in total country area - 8,7%), including one nature reserve, 4 national parks, 85 habitat/species management areas of the national significance and 267 of the local significance, 306 natural monuments of the national significance and 568 of the local significance.

In 2014, 52.529 million tons of **waste** was generated (in 2013 - 40.305 million tons). In the past 15 years, there has been a steady increase in the volume of municipal waste generation. In 2014, the total

amount of the solid municipal waste was 19,434 thousand m³, which significantly exceeded the level of 2010 (17,139 thousand m³).

In 2014 on the territory of the Republic of Belarus there were 42 observation points for **radiation monitoring** to measure the dose rate of gamma radiation. The radiation situation remained stable, the dose rate of gamma radiation in 2013 did not reveal any cases of excess over established multi-year values. As before, elevated levels were recorded at observation points of cities in radioactive contamination zones: Bragin, Narovlya, Khoyniki, Chechersk, Slavgorod.

Main policy responses to key environmental challenges and concerns

The progress has been achieved in the integration of environmental aspects into sectoral legislation and strategic documents. However, the level of such integration is differentiated across sectors and there is scope for stronger integration of environmental requirements in sectoral legislation and planning.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development of Belarus until 2030⁴ was approved in 2015. The Strategy reflects the three pillars of sustainable development by emphasizing the triad “human being – economy – environment”.

The 2011 Environmental Protection Strategy for the period until 2025⁵ was approved. The Strategy is to be implemented through the development and implementation of state strategies, programmes and action plans on specific environmental components, programmes and action plans in economic sectors, regional programmes and local environmental action plans (LEAPs).

The goals of **the Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the period 2011–2020 (2010) as amended in 2015⁶** are to prevent a decrease in the numbers and diversity of species of wild animals, plants and ecosystems and restore rare and endangered species of wild animals and plants, their populations and genetic diversity, sustaining their numbers, which is necessary for their sustainable existence, and to use biological diversity in such a way and with such intensity as not to lead, in the longer term, to its depletion, and so to allow for conserving its ability to satisfy the economic, aesthetic and other needs of the present and future generations.

The 2011 Water Strategy until 2020⁷ outlines the basic principles of the policy and identifies the key action areas for the protection and use of water resources in the country. The Strategy was formulated by taking into consideration the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive and reflecting provisions of the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

The State Programme of Measures to Mitigate the Effects of Climate Change for 2013–2020⁸ (2013) includes measures for saving on fuel use and energy in energy sector, stabilizing GHG emissions by using resource saving techniques in energy-intensive sectors of economy, optimizing waste management, enhancing the absorption of GHGs.

The Strategy for Reduction of Adverse Impacts of Transport on Atmospheric Air⁹ until 2020 was approved in 2013. Euro 5 standard for diesel and petrol is applied.

The 2015 Strategy for Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Management in Minsk Oblast for 2015–2029¹⁰, approved by the Minsk Oblast Council of Deputies, presents measures for improvements of municipal waste management for the period 2015–2029.

National Action Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity for 2016–2020 was approved in 2015¹¹.

⁴ <http://srrb.niks.by/info/program.pdf>

⁵ http://www.minpriroda.gov.by/ru/new_url_1670219329-ru/

⁶ <http://www.minpriroda.gov.by/ru/news-ru/view/3-sentjabrja-2015-goda-postanovleniem-sovetom-ministrov-respubliki-belarus-743-utverzhen-natsionalnyj-plan-1752/>

⁷ http://www.minpriroda.gov.by/ru/new_url_1649710582-ru/

⁸ <http://www.government.by/ru/solutions/2058>

⁹ http://www.minpriroda.gov.by/ru/new_url_2009876790-ru/

¹⁰ http://ecopartnerstvo.by/sites/default/files/strategy_eng.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/by/by-nbsap-v2-p2-en.pdf>

The State Program „Environmental Protection and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources“ for 2016-2020¹² (2016) has been developed in accordance with the main provisions of the National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period until 2030. The State Program defines the goals, objectives and main directions of state policy in the field of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources, financial support and mechanisms for its implementation in accordance with the established target indicative indicators.

Country specific issues

On 21st December 2016, the Council of Ministers adopted the Decree No. 1061, which approved the **National Action Plan for the Development of the Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus**¹³ (hereinafter - the National Plan).

The preparation of this document was carried out in 2016 by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Economy and a number of other authorities as a part of the implementation of the mechanisms and principles of the „green“ economy.

The National plan defines the criteria on the basis of which the assessment of the conformity of economic activity to the principles of the “green” economy will be carried out until 2020.

Belarus is the second country of the Commonwealth of Independent States after Kazakhstan, which approved such a document.

Currently, a number of related projects are being implemented in the country, such as:

„**Forestry Development of the Republic of Belarus**“ implemented by means of the World Bank loan and the related grant provided by the Global Environment Facility.

„**Supporting the transition to a green economy in the Republic of Belarus**“ funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme. The project was launched in 2015.

“**Technical Assistance to Support the Development of Green Economy in Belarus**”. The project is under implementation by a Consortium led by Hulla &Co. Human Dynamics KG and is financing by the European Union.

The Republic of Belarus is a participant of the „**Greening Economies in the European Union’s Eastern Neighbourhood**“ programme, implemented jointly by UNECE, OECD, UNEP and UNIDO.

¹² <http://www.minpriroda.gov.by/ru/gosprog/>

¹³ <http://www.economy.gov.by/uploads/files/1061r.pdf>