

Greening economies in the EU Eastern Partnership countries

BELARUS

Greening economies is important because risks to further development are rising worldwide as the current models of growth continue to erode the stocks of natural assets and undermine the integrity of ecosystem services on which economic activity depends. Failure to adequately manage natural capital will result in increasing costs to substituting for the services it provides. Impacts on economic development are unpredictable as changes in ecosystems, and their capacity to support growth, do not follow a linear, foreseeable trajectory.

Greener models of development will foster economic growth and social development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the material inputs and services on which our economies and well-being rely. The green transformation can bring many positive outcomes, such as enhanced productivity and innovation, creation of new jobs and markets, and fiscal revenue generation. In addition, by promoting resilience to climate change, water and energy security, and maintaining the functioning of ecosystems, green economy reduces the likelihood of abrupt changes that may trigger economic and social shocks. To enable greener development, market signals and policies must catalyse investment and innovation to sustainably manage natural capital and extracting long term benefits from its use.

How can Belarus benefit from greener growth?

Belarus stands out among the countries of Eastern Europe for its natural beauty, cultural wealth and extraordinary human potential. Belarus has also strong industrial and agriculture sectors that support the economy but also impose important ecological footprints. Improving the state of the environment and sustainable resource management remains among the key long-term priorities for national environmental policy. The Council of Ministers of Belarus approved a National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-economic Development up until 2020 which calls for proactive environmental policies to ensure sustainable

management of natural resources, protection of the natural environment and environmental health, improved quality of life, preservation of biodiversity and sustainability of the biosphere. The National Action Plan on Sustainable Natural Resource Management and Environmental Protection was approved by the Presidential Edict.

Although a number of measures have been implemented during the last decade to maintain the natural capital, further challenges remain in reducing air pollution from transport, industry and energy generation sectors as well as controlling and reducing water pollution, soil contamination and waste generation from industrial, agricultural and domestic sources. The accident at the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine, in 1986, still affects the population, environment and economy of Belarus.



Which EaP GREEN activities are planned in Belarus?

Belarus has shown a growing interest in developing green growth strategies, but the capacity for progress is insufficient. In this context, the EaP GREEN programme assists the government in establishing the essential policy frameworks for a green economy through the reform of policy instruments, adoption of new analytical tools, an improved access to environmental finance, the support of capacity development, and the implementation of pilot projects in the public and private sectors.

Key achievements of the EaP GREEN components in Belarus:

- **Support for policy development:** UNEP developed a draft green economy scenario to establish a coherent policy planning framework for sustainable consumption and promotion (SCP) and green economy promotion. A training workshop for green economy simulation was held in July 2014. A working group will conduct further analysis in three selected sectors.
- **Reform of product taxation:** The policy manual on “Creating market incentives for greener products” was finalised and published in English and Russian. A brochure titled “Roadmap for policy action” presented policy makers with a strategy on the use of economic instruments for managing environmentally harmful products.
- **Improvement of investment policies and access to finance:** Commercial banks may have an important role in providing lending for green investments. Delegates from Belarus were invited to attend a regional expert meeting in June 2014 in Paris, France.
- **Promotion of better use of SEA and EIA:** Guidelines on developing national legislative frameworks for the application of the SEA are developed by UNECE. A pilot on post-project analysis (PPA) of environmental impact in the transboundary context in Belarus and Ukraine was carried out towards the end of 2013. A subregional conference for disseminating results was held in April 2014. A report summarising the outcomes was released.
- **Strengthening administrative capacities of authorities in charge of environmental assessment:** Three local training events supported institutional capacity building. In the context of the PPA pilot, recommendations for the roles of the participating national authorities were developed.
- **Demonstration projects and capacity building targeting the private sector:** UNIDO is inventorying existing institutional capacities that could be further supported and developed to promote resource efficient and cleaner production (RECP). Initial and advanced training sessions on RECP methodology took place in 2014.
- **Sustainable public procurement (SPP):** UNEP agreed a project implementation plan for 2014 and supports Belarus in developing SPP policies and practices. An inception workshop was organised to raise awareness on the benefits of SPP, and the joint application of SPP and eco labelling.
- **Organic agriculture:** Building on a scoping study from 2011, UNEP supports the EaP countries in enhancing organic agriculture production and access to markets. A significant potential exists in Belarus to benefit from applying the results of the study in practice.

How is the EaP GREEN programme organised?

The “Greening Economies in the European Union’s Eastern Neighbourhood” (EaP GREEN) programme supports the six the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries to move towards green economy by decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and resource depletion. These countries are: **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.**

The programme is structured around three components:

- Governance and financing tools for sustainable production and consumption (SCP) and green economy;
- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment accompanying SCP policy implementation; and
- Demonstration projects. Governments and the private sector are the key target groups of EaP GREEN.

The programme is financially supported by the European Commission and other donors, and is jointly implemented by four international organisations – OECD, UNECE, UNEP, and UNIDO. The OECD acts as the leading partner with responsibility for overall coordination and visibility.

The EaP GREEN programme has two focal points in each participating country: one from a national ministry of environmental affairs, and another one nominated by the national ministry of economy related matters.

The Programme’s Steering Committee (SC) oversees the programme implementation. Its members include the NFPs, the European Union and representatives of the four implementing partners. The SC meets annually. Such meetings are open to the NGO community and donors, as well as other international organisations.



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