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# EU4Environment

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine

## *Information meeting of the EU4Environment in Belarus*

**9 April 2019, Minsk, Belarus**

### *Brief summary of the meeting*

Action implemented by:



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### **Brief summary of the meeting**

#### **Background**

The “European Union for Environment” (EU4Environment) Action aims to help the six partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, to preserve their natural capital and increase people's environmental well-being, by supporting environment-related action, demonstrating and unlocking opportunities for greener growth, and setting mechanisms to better manage environmental risks and impacts.

The Action will run over four years as of January 2019. It is implemented by five international organisations: OECD, UN Environment, UNECE, UNIDO, and the World Bank based on a budget of around EUR 20 million provided by the European Union and co-financing from other sources.

In March and April 2019, five national meetings to officially launch of the EU4Environment were held in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine and one information meeting was held in Belarus with the aim to:

- present the context, objectives and the main elements of the EU4Environment,
- discuss national priorities for implementation the six EaP countries and
- identifying synergies with ongoing relevant activities.

#### **Meeting in Minsk**

##### ***Participants***

The information meeting of the EU4Environment Initiative in Belarus took place on 9 April in Minsk. It gathered about 40 participants from a range of government agencies responsible for environment, economy, forestry, industry, agriculture, energy, statistics, public procurement. The meeting was opened by:

- Mr. A. Korbut, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection,
- Mr. D. Matusevich, Deputy Minister of Economy, and
- Mr. B. de Groot, Chargé d’Affairs at the EU Delegation to Belarus.

The EU4Environment project team was represented by OECD, UNIDO, UN Environment and the World Bank.

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Several bilateral discussions were also held with government agencies and non-government actors on the margins of the official meetings. As separate meeting was held between the EU4Environment team and the EU Delegation to Belarus.

### ***Results of the meetings***

The discussion at the meeting was very lively and interactive and the meeting achieved its main objectives stated above. It helped to link the EU4Environment plans with the main policy documents and legislation recently adopted in Belarus. The Belarussian side expressed interest in most themes included in the Description of the Action, with specific emphasis on supporting greening SMEs and public procurement, SEA/EIA, strengthening the regulatory framework for large enterprises and in the area of waste management, including EPRs. The EU Delegation pointed out to the need to relate to other relevant projects carried out in Belarus, esp. on-going work on air quality monitoring and collaborate. It was agreed that the Ministries would submit a detailed consolidated list of priority activities, potentially to be implemented in Belarus as part of the “EU4Environment” after its registration, to the OECD by end of April. For more detailed account of the discussion under each Action Result see Annex 1.

Advanced discussion were also held about the institutional arrangements for the Project implementation, including the identification of the National Focal Points from both Ministries, inter-ministerial co-ordination, local project co-ordination and support, as well as the Project visibility and communications.

Some time of the discussion was devoted to a formal procedure of the Action registration in Belarus, which may take up to 12 months. During the discussion it was stated that the Action implementation could only start after formal registration (ie. the Action’s starting date may need to be aligned with the date of its registration, i.e. not 1 January 2019). The budget will also most probably need to be defined prior to registration. One possible way to advance the activities in Belarus may be to register the Action by individual agencies with different beneficiaries (as a series of educational/awareness events). Another option discussed was to initiate regional level activities before registration, as done with some previous projects.

### **Follow up**

The follow up of both meetings will involve intensive exchanges with the Belarussian partners about the detailed list of priority activities and the arrangements for in-country project support.

A potential draft work plan for Belarus (to support the Action registration process), as for all other EaP countries, will be presented at the meeting of the EU EaP Panel of Environment and Climate Change (27-28 May, Vienna). The final adoption of the work plans is planned at first meeting of the EU4Environment Regional Assembly (27-28 June, Brussels).

## *Annex: Priority issues raised during the discussions on specific Results of the EU4Environment*

### **1. Green Decision Making**

- Overall framework for Green Economy established which also provides a ground for the implementation of Circular Economy. Reforms should aim at concrete realisation of the national sustainable development strategy ‘till 2030 and coordinated by the Ministry of Economy.
- UNDP’s pilots have demonstrated the environmental and social case for a Green Economy – today these require nationwide replication (not merely at enterprise level).
- With the new Law on organic production the market and export opportunities are growing, and standards are being developed. The country is keen to raise the profile of organic production as was done in neighbouring Ukraine.
- SEA/EIA
  - Legal support needed but also training for practitioners: need for a training centre on EIA
- Awareness and education:
  - There is interest in further educating government representatives on climate change and GHG emission reduction efforts-strategies.
  - Civil servants could also participate in more technical trainings, or those designed specifically for upper management.
  - Interest in developing public awareness/education campaigns on the topic of waste, showing also EU/OECD country experience.

### **2. Circular Economy and New Growth Opportunities**

- Strong involvement of the Ministry of Economy needed in implementing Results 2
- SMEs
  - Need for co-ordination of international support provided to SMEs (EBRD, UNDP, UNIDO).
  - SMEs require training on implementing concrete actions related to the green economy. Good work by Kommunarka factory but follow up needed.
  - Industrial Parks already in place (Great Stone)
  - Assistance to SMEs is necessary with focus on regions to increase their competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs in different sectors, including construction, transport, agriculture and forestry.
- Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP)
  - Currently the work on SPP is coordinated by the Ministry of Trade, but the Ministries of Economy and Environment should be involved in future work.

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- Keen to develop SPP in alignment with lessons from the rest of the EaP region.
  - Currently no national norms on SPP. Eco-labelling is needed to drive domestic demand and access EU markets (e.g. in line with ISO standards on type 3 eco-labels).
  - Gosstandard government agency oversees all certification (in some ways competing with Ministry of Environment) but has little ecological expertise – thus need to involve universities and consulting companies to develop eco-labelling, and create a technical committee in this body.
  - Today only ISO 14001 is widely implemented. “Zeleniy Aist” certification also exists for schools and churches.
  - Food labelling remains quite unreliable as verification along the entire production chain is difficult. May be interesting to learn from Ukraine’s experiences in this field.
  - Waste Management:
    - Very relevant topic, especially as per capita waste production is high, a strategy on municipal waste management ‘till 2030 and even a concept on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) have been developed. However coordination mechanisms and implementation remain very limited.
    - Different Ministries are involved in coordinating different waste streams, thus inter-ministerial coordination will be essential. Need to involve Ministry of Housing who are the key implementor at municipal/local level.
    - Strong interest from Ministry of Environment to develop an electronic waste reporting/inventory system, with the option of public information access.
    - Interest in coordinating with regional UNIDO’s project on hazardous waste management (specifically pesticides/POPs) which is currently in the phase of selecting technical solutions, however has a small budget (USD 4 million until 2022) and our efforts could be combined to develop a new pesticide disposal facility.
    - Need to further advance concepts of Extended Producer responsibility (EPR) – there is legislation for producers to collect/recycle waste (e.g. PET) but there are very few recycling plants/businesses/SMEs and funding for them is limited. One interesting company is the Minsk re-manufacturer of refrigerators.
    - Another approach is leasing and centralised collection of tyres (included in EPR scheme and Presidential Decree). Ministry of Economy would support this approach very much.
    - The Puhovic district has been successful in implementing e-waste management schemes.
    - Efforts towards waste minimisation are needed – e.g. regulation on limiting use of combined packaging that contributes to landfilling, encouraging producers/exporters to switch packaging (glass instead of PET), reduce single-use plastics, higher import tariffs for ecologically damaging products.
    - Hazardous waste management in an important topic but already some work done by UNIDO on old pesticide destruction.

- Eco-innovation:
  - Efforts to drive sustainability among SMEs require strong coordination among multiple Ministries, to ensure complementarity between work that is being/has been done by various agencies (UNEP, UNDP, EBRD etc.)
  - Currently a new ecological concept is being developed for an industrial park (Chinese and European companies) – it would be great to incorporate this as an activity under EU4Environment.
  - Many initiatives do exist at company level, so we can build upon this long-term interest/action.
  - Best to approach companies/SMEs through regional/local bodies of the Ministry of Economy who gather local companies and have ability to sell the economic case.
  - EBRD’s business advisory services also have a good network of SMEs which we may want to capitalise upon.
  - We should use UNIDO’s identified priority sectors (agriculture, agri-processing, construction, building materials) as well as existing RECP audits to identify potential companies.
  - Companies outside Minsk will likely still need awareness/training on the eco-innovation concept/methodology.
  - It is hard to obtain market/sector/policy analyses and statistics, it is thus best to use RECP audits to see how companies want to move forward/selecting companies for the call for proposals.

### ***3. An Environmental Level Playing Field***

- Smart regulations and compliance promotion
  - Full support to work on “smart” regulations, linked to BAT based approaches and permitting. Support to integrated permitting needed, links with EIA (and State Environmental Expertise) and also with establishing and expanding monitoring systems, including self-monitoring.
  - Need for capacity building for inspectors and new approaches to inspections based on risk analysis.
  - Involvement of citizens in compliance assurance.
  - Development of approaches to calculating and applying environmental liability.
- Green finance
  - Need for analysis of environmental taxation (60% of existing taxes that are collected is allocated to local authorities)
  - Need for training for government officials in developing finance strategies and investment plans for addressing climate related emissions, need to adjust to different sectors.
  - Interest in exploring the use of green bonds.

- Assistance to the green bankable projects preparation for financing.
- Need for institutional and human capacity assessment in the environmental field, sharing experience with other countries.

#### ***4. Ecosystems and Livelihoods***

- Presidential decree adopted that supports the Emerald Network.
- Work with communities in the context of biodiversity conservation and forest management and economic development of rural areas is important, an important role of Ministry of Forestry but also Agriculture and Environment.
- Need for support to the strategic development of forestry sector, the Action can provide a platform for exchange of experience and knowledge.

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