



Action funded by the European Union

**EU4Environment**

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

# Towards a Green Economy in **Belarus**

## Work in Progress – 2019-20



Action implemented by:





# Towards a Green Economy in Belarus

## EU4Environment Work in Progress – 2019-20

Since 2019, the EU-funded EU4Environment Programme has been supporting Belarus, along with the other five Eastern Partner (EaP) countries, in pursuing its path of green transformation. It helps 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.

During 2020, the work was considerably affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this unprecedented global challenge, the programme pursued its planned activities and generated several concrete results on the ground.

This brochure highlights activities under EU4Environment in 2019-20, showing concrete results in Belarus and at the regional level.



### Greener decision making

- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) legislation:** EU4Environment supported the review of the country's primary and secondary legislation on EIA and SEA.

- **In-depth Green Economy policy-making training course:** Five civil servants took part in a tailored online course. They learned how to review, analyse and integrate green economy, sustainable consumption and production approaches into policies and strategies at national and sectoral levels.



**DID YOU KNOW? SEA and water:** SEA mainstreams environmental, health and climate change objectives in a country's strategic documents. Belarus has applied SEA to improve its draft national Strategy for water resources management for the period until 2030 in the context of climate change with the support of the EU-funded EUWI+.

**Sustainable use of peatlands:** Belarus has taken an important step towards implementation of its commitments under the Paris Agreement with the adoption of a new law "On the protection and use of peatlands". The law establishes the legal framework for the protection and sustainable use of peatlands and their resources. It addresses conservation and improvement of water quality and biosphere functions, as well as satisfaction of economic, aesthetic and other needs of present and future generations.



## Circular economy and new growth opportunities

- **Four online sessions on Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP) in Belarus:** 20 experts deepened their knowledge and discussed the application of cleaner production as a feasible, profit-oriented environmental strategy for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- **Future RECP experts:** Training of 15 future RECP experts was launched as part of the coaching programme to help expand the pool of resource efficiency experts in the country. In parallel, coaching sessions for 15 manufacturing enterprises engaged their employees in the assessment process and to learn about the benefits of applying the methodology.
- **RECP university course:** The RECP course was developed and approved by the Educational and Methodological Council of the Institute of Business of the Belarus State

University as part of its Industrial Ecology educational programme for professionals.



- **Environmentally friendly industrial parks:** With the launch of assessments of Free Economic Zones (FEZ) in Mogilev and Minsk, Belarus is advancing to align with the international eco-industrial parks framework.
- **Gender sensitisation in greening national industries:** The training workshop promoted gender equity. It helped better understand gender stereotypes and their influence on decision making, introduced gender aspects in the field of RECP and circular economy, and presented basic statistics on Belarus in the field of gender equality.



**DID YOU KNOW? Reducing polymer packaging:** Resolution No. 7 of the Council of Ministers of January 2020 approved an action plan to gradually reduce use of polymer packaging. The plan prohibits the use and sale of disposable plastic tableware in catering facilities from 1 January 2021. Reducing the volume of plastic tableware waste will significantly reduce the anthropogenic burden on the environment.

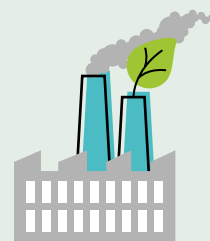
Resource efficiency experts in assessment audits pay attention to the use of packaging materials and how they are further processed. RECP provides a structured approach to determine the potential for material savings and reduced waste by avoiding use of non-recyclable materials.



## Environmental level playing field

- **Assessing progress on greening SMEs:** The evaluation, part of the SME Policy Index, showed that Belarus had introduced significant policies for greening the environment. Although they do not specifically target SMEs, they may potentially benefit some SMEs and build a foundation for their growth.
- **Collection of 2010-19 data on fossil fuel subsidies for the OECD-IEA database:** The inclusion of Belarus, along with other EaP countries, in the OECD-IEA database on fossil fuel subsidies is an important milestone in achieving transparency in this area. It also recognises the efforts of EaP governments to disclose information on the size of

government support provided to the energy sector in these countries.



- **Unlocking the potential of the green bond market:** The work analyses the possibility of using green bonds to raise additional resources for the transition to a low-carbon and resilient economy.
- **Strengthening the administrative capacity of the environmental sector:** The analysis was launched to assess administrative capacity for greening the economy, identify gaps and recommend reforms.



**DID YOU KNOW? Data on fossil fuel subsidies** for 2010-19 for the EaP countries, including Belarus, is available in the OECD-IEA database for fossil fuel subsidies and integrated into the OECD database on green growth indicators. For example, total fossil fuel support in Belarus in 2018 accounted for 0.14% of gross domestic product. All public support went to fossil fuel producers. Visit: <https://stats.oecd.org/>





## Ecosystem Services and Livelihoods

- **Biodiversity and sustainable forestry:** The European Union and the World Bank signed an agreement at the end of 2020 allowing the World Bank to join EU4Environment in 2021. This work will support ecosystem services and livelihoods in the six EaP countries, including Belarus. The activities will strengthen the Emerald Network and the management of existing

protected areas and sites. They will also contribute to better forest conservation and sustainable use, prevention of illegal trade and awareness about new green finance instruments for the sustainable management of forests and ecosystem services.



## Highlights of COVID-19 green responses in Belarus

The year 2020 was marked by the unprecedented global challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic whose health and socio-economic impacts affected all countries around the world. In Belarus, where the export of refined petroleum products amounts to about 20% of gross domestic product (GDP), the fall in commodity prices has had a negative impact. Based on International Monetary Fund estimates, GDP of Belarus was expected to fall to - 3% in 2020 compared to 1.2% in 2019 before reaching 2.2% in 2021. Unemployment was projected to rise to 1.4% in 2020 and 1.1% in 2021 compared to 0.3% in 2019.

In the EaP region, Belarus was the only country that did not adopt strict confinement measures. However, the country took a number of measures to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the global crisis. Some of these measures, highlighted below, aim at advancing environmental objectives:

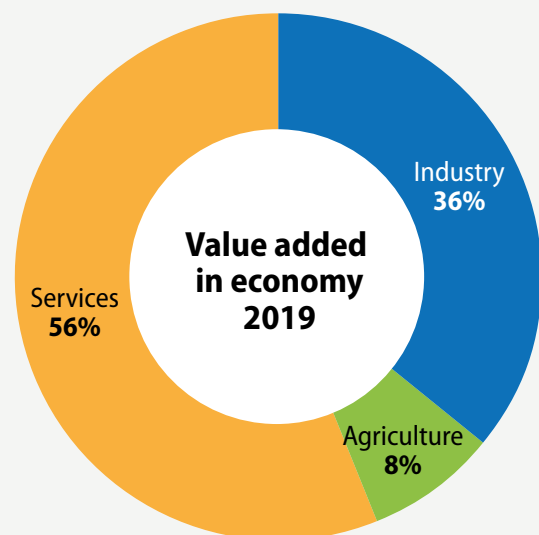
- **Continuing to advance environmental objectives:** During the pandemic, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus has continued implementing environmental programmes and strategies to sustain improvements and address remaining challenges.
- **New socio-economic development programme:** Several ministries are developing a new programme of socio-economic development for 2021-25, in co operation with the business community and general public. Supporting green economy, attracting green investments, introducing eco-innovation and creating green jobs are among the key elements.
- **Creating green jobs:** The government of Belarus is working with the World Bank to revise forestry projects in response to COVID-19 to create more green jobs.

To support Belarus in these efforts, EU4Environment held a **virtual country consultation** with government officials. Participants reviewed the country's situation in light of COVID-19 and discussed how to tailor EU4Environment activities to support green recovery from the crisis more effectively.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Population 2019: **9 452 min.**

Real GDP per capita 2019: **18 900** USD 2015



#### DID YOU KNOW?

EU4Environment has revamped its **website**. It provides an extensive overview of its work on the implementation of green policies in EaP countries.

As of 31 December 2020, EU4Environment counted 329 newsletter subscribers and reached out to 150 000 people on social media.

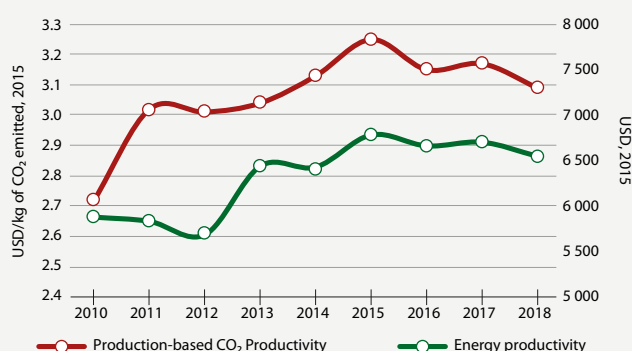
Subscribe to our monthly **newsletters** and follow us on **Facebook**.

# Highlights of regional activities

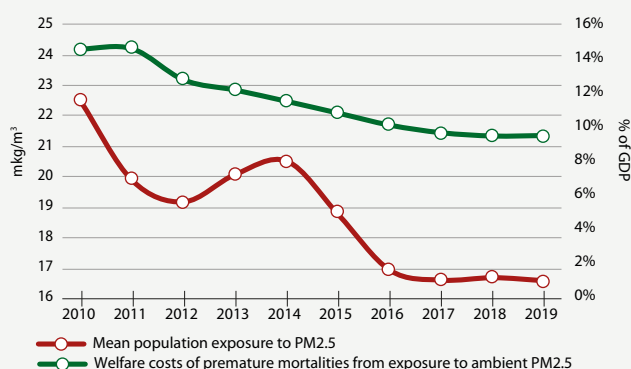
- Sub-regional workshop on the practical application of SEA and transboundary EIA:** More than 40 representatives of environmental authorities from the EaP countries, including Belarus, exchanged experiences in the development of national environmental assessment systems. In addition, they received guidance and targeted training on applying environmental assessment tools and good international practice.
- Transboundary EIA procedures/Espoo Convention video:** It raises awareness on EIA procedures and promotes related benefits for the EaP countries.
- Regional training on Environmental Management Systems (EMS):** More than 50 experts from the EaP countries took part in this hands-on training. Using the example of an Austrian chocolate producer, participants worked on its full production cycle – from cacao beans to the final product. They also analysed and developed the key stages of the EMS application – from stakeholders' analysis to conformity monitoring standards.
- Regional workshop on the implementation of eco-industrial parks:** More than 140 participants from EaP and Central Asian countries reviewed the operations of eco-industrial parks. They used international best practices, such as improving socio-economic and environmental performance of park residents, promoting resource efficiency and circular economy, and creating innovative avenues for responsible business practices.
- Regional seminar on Best Available Techniques (BAT):** More than 50 participants reviewed progress in applying BAT approaches in the EaP countries, including Belarus. They discussed challenges and accomplishments, while learning from the experiences of peer countries and EU members on approaches to support implementation.
- Regional seminar on risk-based approaches to environmental compliance assurance:** About 50 officials and experts, including from Belarus, shared experiences and learned best practices in using risk-based approaches to environmental compliance assurance in the EU and EaP economies. The EU Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) also participated.
- Two EU4Environment Regional Assembly meetings** reviewed progress with EU4Environment implementation and agreed on plans. The meetings also provided a platform for regional knowledge sharing and dissemination of best practices.

## GREEN GROWTH INDICATORS IN BELARUS: WHAT DO THEY TELL US?

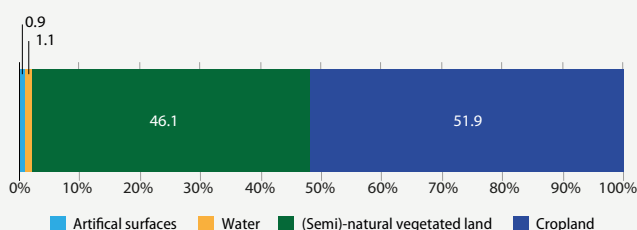
**1 Environmental and resource productivity:** Higher CO<sub>2</sub> and energy productivity means a less polluting, more resource-efficient economy, and a better climate and environment



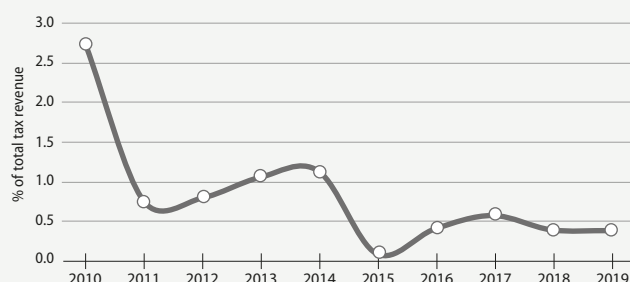
**2 Environmental dimension of quality of life:** Lower exposure to fine particles means cleaner air and healthier people, and is less costly for the government



**3 Natural asset base:** Stable stocks of natural resources ensure sustainable use, which is essential for green economy transition



**4 Economic opportunities and policy responses:** Removing fossil fuel subsidies can reduce fiscal deficits, make renewable energy more competitive, and lower carbon and air pollution



## About

# EU4Environment

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



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EU4Environment integrates into a single strategic framework initiative to achieve greener decision making, sustainable economy and green growth, smart environmental regulations, ecosystem protection and knowledge sharing.

- **Budget:** about EUR 20 million for the six EaP countries (with EUR 19.5 EU contribution)
- **Duration:** 2019-2022
- **Implementing agencies:** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Bank
- **Overall guidance:** European Commission
- **Key national partners in Belarus:** Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection; Ministry of Economy

## EU4Environment at a glance: EaP countries in 2020

**7 000**  
views of our new look  
website since its launch  
in mid-October

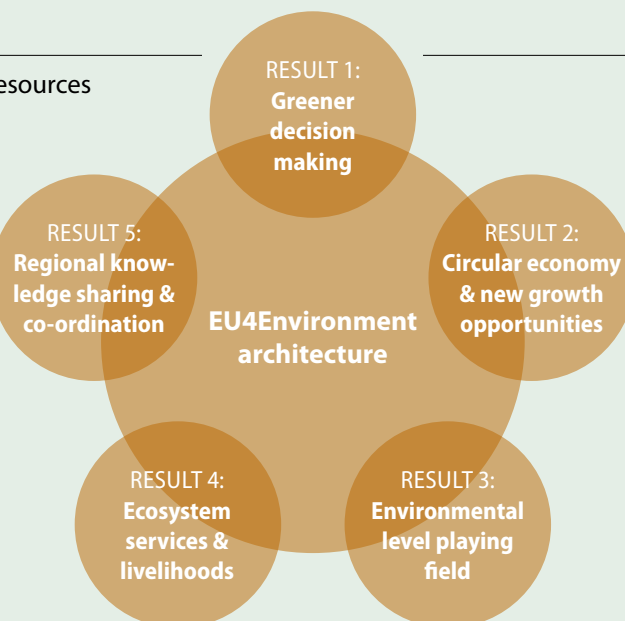
**Over 250**  
experts trained  
on RECP

**Over 190**  
participants  
trained on SEA



**Over 100**  
people took a new  
Green Economy course

**Over 90**  
SMEs consider RECP as a  
part of COVID-19 recovery



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<http://eepurl.com/gUNbg1>

### Contact us:



[eu4environment@oecd.org](mailto:eu4environment@oecd.org)

**Sources:** OECD Statistics on green growth indicators (population, real GDP, economic structure, GGIs); World Bank database (remittances); IMF World Economic Outlook (GDP and unemployment projections); OECD paper "COVID-19 crisis response in EaP countries" (remittances, informality, extractives data, COVID-19 green responses); ILO paper "Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture" (informality); interventions by the country representatives at the EU4Environment country consultations (COVID-19 green responses); inputs by the National Action Co ordinators and the Implementing Partners.

**Disclaimer:** This country profile was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union, its members or the governments of the Eastern Partnership countries. This document and any content included herein are without prejudice to the status of, or sovereignty over, any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries, and to the name of any territory, city or area.

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