

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION IN BELARUS

TRENDS, BARRIERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.
A CIVIC REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOAL 12 IMPLEMENTATION



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INTRODUCTION

In September 2015 the UN Member States adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (Agenda 2030). The document comprises 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that need to be met by 2030. Belarus has been an active participant in the process of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals both at the national and the civic society level.

To assess progress towards SDGs, there exists a system of global and national indicators as well as other tools, including the analysis of meeting one or another goal. Civic or public reviews of meeting all of the goals or individual goals are among the tools used by countries. Such reviews have been already prepared by a fairly large number of countries including Germany and Russia.

This review represents the assessment of the process of achieving SDG 12 by Belarus carried out by the [Partnership Group for Sustainable Development](#) and independent public experts in March 2021. The review pays special attention to the input by civic society in SDG 12 implementation in Belarus.

Sustainable Development Goal 12, *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*, has been selected for preparation for the first civic review of SDG meeting in Belarus with a view that, on the one hand, it reflects the important and comprehensive role that sustainable production and consumption play in the global sustainable development realm and on the other hand, it allows for the involvement of a wide spectrum of organisations and experts in the preparation of this review.

Phases of work on the review included expert analysis of the work being done in the country concerning individual tasks under SDG 12, keeping track of viewpoints of the stakeholder community representatives on the progress of SDG 12 implementation in Belarus, expert discussions to formulate key conclusions and recommendations of the review, and public debates of the prepared draft review in the scope of a partnership group operation, also with the key persons concerned. The review was prepared with statistical data available on the [National platform for reporting indicators of Sustainable Development Goals](#), materials of relevant government institutions and civic society organisations, media publications, and interviews with experts.

BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Development Goal 12, *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*, is among the key goals in the environmental block of SDGs; in addition, its achievement involves rather important economic and social matters. SDG 12 has multiple components and comprises 11 different tasks related to various aspects of sustainable production and consumption.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is the coordinator of key measures of SDG 12 implementation in Belarus. Among the institutions in charge of the performance of indicators within individual SDG 12 tasks also are the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Housing and Public Utilities, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, the National Statistics Committee, the Ministry of Sports and Tourism, and the Ministry of Finance.

The public sector is one of the key structures contributing to the country's SDG 12 achievement; its representatives initiate and support multiple projects affecting the implementation of individual tasks. It should be generally noted that the achievement of the goal depends on interaction between all the sectors including the government, the public and business; citizens are also rather important in their role as consumers and with their ability to directly affect the implementation of individual tasks within the overall goal.

The information on national indicators and datasets for indicators related to SDG 12 is presented on the [National platform for reporting indicators of Sustainable Development Goals](#)¹ maintained by the National Statistics Committee. The SDG 12 national indicator system in Belarus is based on respective global indicators approved by the UN.

Meanwhile, it is worth noting that datasets for national indicators in Belarus on some SDG 12 tasks, e.g. on 12.6.1, 12.7.1, 12.8.1, have not been uploaded to the Reporting Platform.

The global [Sustainable Development Report](#)² (formerly SDG Index) [ranks Belarus 24th among 193 countries](#)³; however, it shows no progress with SDG 12.

It should be pointed out that the data categories selected for analysis in this ranking are almost completely at odds with the national SDG 12 indicators, which, in our view, makes it difficult to use the rating to assess progress on this SDG.

ASSESSMENT OF STATUS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TARGETS OF SDG 12 IN BELARUS

12.1 Implement the 10-year framework of programmes for sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries.

Official national indicators. It should be noted the national target performance indicator (indicator) only involves the statement of national action plan availability, which compounds the assessment of real progress in target implementation. The data for the indicator have been uploaded to the National Platform.

In 2016, the country adopted its first [National Action Plan for the Development of Green Economy in Belarus until 2020⁴](#), currently the only planning document partially touching matters of transition towards sustainable consumption and production models.

Overall, the priorities of the National Plan for Green Economy Development (e-transport development, energy efficiency in construction, lowering GDP energy intensity, broader use of renewable energy sources, providing conditions for the development of organic production, sustainable production and consumption, the development of green tourism), while not inconsistent with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production (sustainable public procurement, accessibility of sustainable production and consumption-related information for consumers, sustainable tourism, sustainable way of living and education, sustainable construction and buildings, sustainable food systems), nonetheless do not cover the whole spectrum of actions needed to achieve SDG 12.

We would also like to point out that the adopted plan was of a rather preliminary nature as its implementation did not imply the appropriation of additional budget funds and the document section Sustainable Production and Consumption covered only individual thematic aspects like the development of environmental standardisation and labelling, organising green procurement, carrying out environmental audits, education and training initiatives on sustainable consumption and lifestyle and other such actions. A detailed review of National Action Plan implementation progress has been presented in the report on [Analysis of Green Economy Concept Implementation in the Republic of Belarus and Development of Proposals for Inclusion in the National Action Plan for the Development of Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus until 2025⁵](#) (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Nat. Acad. Sci. of Belarus, 2020).

In general, the introduction of joint consumption economy components (joint use (sharing) of means of transport; sharing of corporate spaces), the development of organic farming, the establishment and the operation of the National Centre for Resource-efficient and Cleaner Production with the Institute of Business at the Belarusian State University can be included in the list of positive developments within the context of transition towards sustainable production and consumption models in Belarus. It is also important to note

promotion of a circular economy concept including the development of one-off business projects and development of individual regional strategies and plans in the field (Circular Economy Strategy of Brest Oblast designed in 2020; Circular Economy Action Plan of Mogilev Oblast to be designed in 2021).

It is worth noting that in the past few years the topics of an environmentally friendly lifestyle and sustainable consumption have become more in-demand among the public as well as more visible across the media landscape of Belarus.

Besides measures implemented in the framework of the National Green Economy Plan, Belarus has also seen a substantial number of actions carried out on the initiative of the wider public and the commercial sector. These measures contribute to achieving such priorities of the 10-year framework of the programmes as accessibility of sustainable production and consumption-related information for consumers, sustainable lifestyle and education, and sustainable tourism.

Example of NGO contribution. [Think Before You Buy information campaign](#) (Ecopartnership IPO), 2014–2020

The Think Before You Buy campaign notifies consumers about potentially hazardous chemical substances that may be present in various goods (household cleaning products, DIY goods, garments and children's toys) and food products, and demonstrates the importance of reducing chemical exposure risks and switching to safe alternatives. The main focus of the campaign is informing the public in a variety of ways: from educational events to designing information materials for different target groups, etc.

The Think Before You Buy campaign has a [website](#) of its own with materials about health and environmental risks related to the use of hazardous substances, information about potential hazardous chemical substances in various staple items and advice on how to look for safer alternatives and minimise the effects of hazardous chemical substances.



Street action «Think Before You Buy». Photo: «Ecopartnership»

■ **Example of NGO contribution.**

Assessment of the situation with the introduction of a circular economy in the textile sector in Belarus (Centre of Environmental Solutions, institution), 2021

A survey was carried out on the environmental safety of the textile and clothing industries in Belarus, to identify the potential of the implementation of certain circular economy principles in the national textile sector, to look into existing practices, and to substantiate prospective areas of sectorial circular transformation.

It revealed specific aspects of the attitude towards environmental protection and safety among both manufacturers and consumers, and identified factors that prompt one to either become environmentally friendly or the contrary. The conducted assessment showed that, while the country has grounds and a framework for the development of environmentally-friendly production, for the transition to happen the level of awareness of both producers and consumers should be increased.

12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

Official national indicators. The target performance indicators are assessed based on data collected by the UNEP. There is no data on the target indicators uploaded to the National Platform.

The UN statistics portal [has data for Belarus](#)⁶ on the target (as of 2017).

12.2.1 Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP: 2.7 kg per GDP unit (*by comparison, Ukraine: 4.3; Poland: 1.2*).

12.2.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP: 17.5 metric tons per capita (*by comparison, Ukraine: 12,5; Poland: 18.8*).

It is worth noting that the indicators for this target are identical to those for target 8.4, which serves as a good example of the interconnectedness and integration of the SDG system, and specifically of environmental and economic aspects in SDG 12.

As the target is a complex one, in this general review we will only look at its individual aspects. The environmental and economic efficiency of natural resources and materials utilised in production and consumption processes in Belarus characteristically demonstrate inconsistent change dynamics. While a more detailed situation assessment is presented in [Analysis of Green Economy Concept Implementation in the Republic of Belarus and Development of Proposals for Inclusion in the National Action Plan for the Development of Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus until 2025](#)⁷ (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Nat. Acad. Sci. of Belarus, 2020), some features from the analysis are highlighted below:

- The carbon efficiency of production is an indicator that reflects the gross domestic product volume per CO₂ emission unit at production. It has been steadily growing from BYN0.3/kg in 2010 to BYN1.5/kg in 2015 and, during the period of National Green Economy Plan implementation, to BYN2.0/kg (2018).
- Production waste generation per GDP has been showing a downward trend from 2.57 kg/BYN in 2010 to 0.55 kg/BYN in 2015 reaching the minimum value for the analysed period of 0.46 kg/BYN in 2019.
- At the same time, the intensity of per capita production waste generation for the surveyed period has grown by 41%, to 6.5 tons per capita, and the intensity of per capita solid household waste generation has also been maintaining a negative growth trend.
- Natural habitats and ecological systems in Belarus occupy 11,417.1 thousand ha, or 55% of the country's territory (20,759.8 thousand ha), and comprise woods (9,696.8 thousand ha, 40.1%), shrubs (664.4 thousand ha, 3.2%), grasslands (794 thousand ha, 3.8%), marshes (859 thousand ha, 4.1%) and water bodies (469 thousand ha, 2.2%). Of those ecological systems, of particular value for biodiversity are deciduous, coniferous-broadleaf and black alder woods; wetlands or seasonally flooded grasslands, marshes, lakes and ecosystems in river valleys and riverbeds.

Example of NGO contribution. [Polesia: Wilderness Without Borders. Protecting one of Europe's largest natural landscapes](#) Project (APB-Birdlife Belarus. CSO), 2019–2021.

The project aims at the preservation of natural landscapes of the Pripjat Polesia threatened with extinction.

Project specialists research natural areas and collect scientific data to support the expansion of designated conservation areas.

Public involvement is an important component of the monitoring as it contributes to the implementation of a citizen science approach in Belarus.

The scope of the project also involves plans of re-swamping more than six thousand hectares of previously drained land. Another key task of the project is to improve the management of designated natural conservation areas by reviewing the existing management plans and designing new ones, as well as tangible and intangible support of organisations managing these areas.



Field research of the project «Polesie - Wildlife» without Borders». Photo from the archive of the project

ENVIRONMENTAL AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY OF THE ECONOMY (N. N. BATOVA, 2020)

Name of indicator	Years											Dynamics, in %	
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2019/2010	2019/2015
Carbon efficiency linked to production, BYN/kg	0,3	0,5	0,9	1,1	1,3	1,5	1,6	1,7	2,0	NA	NA	566,7	33,3
Carbon efficiency linked to consumption, BYN/kg	0,3	0,5	0,8	1,0	1,2	1,5	1,5	1,7	1,9	NA	NA	533,3	26,7
Energy efficiency (GDP at 2005 prices), BYN thousand/kg fuel equivalent	2,4	2,4	2,3	2,6	2,6	2,7	2,7	2,7	2,6	2,7	NA	12,5	0,0
GDP energy efficiency (GDP at 2005 prices), kg fuel equivalent/BYN mio	423,8	412,1	438,9	386,7	387,7	369,9	374,5	376,1	380,2	372,0	NA	-12,2	0,6
Share of electricity generated from renewable energy sources in total electricity generation, %	0,4	0,4	0,6	0,9	0,7	0,9	1,1	2,2	1,8	2,5	NA	525,0	177,8
Production waste generation intensity per GDP, kg/BYN.	2,57	1,44	0,75	0,60	0,65	0,55	0,52	0,52	0,50	0,46	NA	-82,1	-16,4
Per capita production waste generation, tons per capita	4,6	4,7	4,3	4,3	5,5	5,3	5,2	5,8	6,4	6,5	NA	41,3	22,6
Production waste regeneration rate, k	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,5	0,3	0,2	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,3	NA	0,0	50,0
Per capita solid household waste generation intensity, kg per capita	388,8	404,5	393,9	388,9	392,9	393,5	399,3	400,2	400,2	401,9	NA	3,4	2,1
Water resource use efficiency, BYN/m ³	11,0	19,3	33,3	43,0	51,9	61,4	63,0	72,6	84,0	92,9	NA	744,5	51,3

12.3 By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.

At this time, the implementation of target 12.3 poses a serious challenge to Belarus as it can – and has to be – on a plane of close interaction between several departments, both those in charge of waste collection and recycling system management (Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment Protection), and those regulating norms and requirements for the sustainability of food production, logistics and sales systems (in our case, the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food). Notably, the country reports on meeting targets rest with international agencies (UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), UNEP), which, to a certain extent, relieves national governmental authorities of the responsibility of feeding into the indicator. It should be noted that the method of calculating the target indicator is still debated at the international level, which generally limits data availability.

The analysis of the current situation has allowed the identification of a lack of any substantial progress in meeting the target in the country. Specifically, there is no systemic statistical data collection to shape and track key target indicators (food loss index, food waste index) and no national action plan on food waste has been developed.

At the same time, individual information on losses of certain types of agricultural products is presented in the Food Resource Balance publication publicly available from the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Belarus (e.g., the information for 2014–2019 can be found [here](#)⁸).

Besides this, [Belarus presented two reports for 1990 – 2019⁹](#) with data on annual food losses in one of the key food industries, meat processing, for the Meat and Animal Products commodity group. Meanwhile, the country has never had a similar undertaking to assess losses of grains, legume crops, fruits or vegetables (in comparison, Ukraine has had 14 reports prepared for the current period while Poland has 26 and Russia has three reports). Importantly, there is some inspection of this specific indicator and the losses in general carried out at production sites, although it is irregular and most often done at the local initiative of the top management. This can be easily explained by the logic of production optimisation, when it is concerned with increasing profits by expenditure reduction, and by cutting production losses.

In addition, food waste index data for Belarus is entirely absent. The category has a 'floating' status since, while retail and hospitality businesses are required by [law¹⁰](#) to have separate bins for food waste collection and disposal, the waste registry labels such waste as simply 'organic'. Thus, it is not possible to calculate the amount of food waste in organic waste or the share of so-called unavoidable food waste. From the global statistics, the most food waste is generated in private households. As there is not separate food waste collection from residents in Belarus, it is only possible to do rough calculations based on ratios from other countries. According to public surveys (Novak Laboratory, 2017), 39% of the population generally throw food remains in the garbage.

On top of the lack of statistical data, sustainable approaches to the treatment of food waste have not been sufficiently developed in the country. This specifically concerns components of the sustainable foodstuffs management described in the [Food Recovery Hierachy¹¹](#). Notably, there is no system to redistribute quality food products to the needy in place; no official and regulated practice of forwarding excess food and food waste as fodder for animal breeding farms; no country-wide ecosystem of biogas plants and industrial waste composting installations; and no efficient tools to incentivise transition towards more sustainable practices.

Thus, it is fair to say that target 12.3 is currently not considered a priority for the country, though it requires more attention from the state. Today, the matter is resolved only at the level of local initiatives of individual manufacturers or by means of non-commercial projects. However, the topic definitely has great potential for future development.

Example of NGO contribution. PISHCHA Food Bank
(Centre for Environmental Solutions), 2019–2021.

The Food Bank is a charity initiative that collects foodstuffs from producers and distributors and subsequently distributes them to individuals in dire life situations. Similar schemes have been successfully carried out for 50 years worldwide and remain the government's key partners in solving social and environmental issues.

The Pischcha food bank initiative has been operating for several years in Belarus as a pilot at the premises of the Centre for Environmental Solutions. During this time, the project has been able to redistribute more than eight tons of foodstuffs among more than 1,000 needy families. The project operates solely in Minsk but can expand its operational area to other regions as well.



*Food action action of the food bank «Pishcha», Minsk.
Photo: «Pishcha»*

12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all waste throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release into air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment

This target is a multifaceted one and in the scope of this review we will look at only some aspects of its implementation in Belarus.

Performance indicators for this target allow for the evaluation of only a rather limited range of necessary measures, e.g. the country's participation in international multilateral agreements on chemical substances or matters of production waste treatment. At the same time, the very wording of the target suggests a rather more in depth approach to the problem.

On the one hand, substantial progress in the safe use of chemical substances and waste can be observed in Belarus. Specifically, one should note positive dynamics in areas like disposal of unusable pesticides, management of waste and materials containing PCB, the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the implementation of individual components and priorities of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), designing a system for the collection of household electrical and electronic waste and substantial progress in the collection of such waste, work on designing a chemical registry, work on designing a pollutant emission and transfer registry, etc.

In 2021, a [Road Map Towards Sound Management of Chemicals in Belarus](#)¹² was published (on the initiative of the Scientific and Practical Centre of Hygiene). The interest and activity of the Ministry of Public Health Protection and its structural units in the area of chemical substance management have increased.

On the other hand, it has not been possible to achieve by 2020 the set target of environmentally sustainable use of chemical substances and all the waste throughout their life cycle. That is, a lot is yet to be done. It is worth mentioning that Belarus has not yet become a party to the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Rotterdam Convention (on hazardous chemicals and pesticides). There is practically no progress in the area of regulation and management of 'new' persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in the framework of the Stockholm Convention; there exist issues with the use, regulation and monitoring of dangerous chemicals in consumer goods; lead is still being used as a colouring pigment in household paints. Many other matters of chemical safety also remain topical.

There is no statistical reporting on, and inventory count of, chemicals in use in Belarus; there is also no national registry of chemicals in use, and the inventory of emissions, ways and means of substance transfer is yet to be fully designed. Insufficient development of technical infrastructure (also due to the lack of information about the range of chemicals used in production processes in a particular region with description of their potential negative effects and features making them subject to priority research and analysis) does not currently allow for the monitoring of both environmental pollution and the possible consequences for public health, nor does it permit the identification of priority chemicals for observation, assessment and preventive measure planning.

At the moment, Belarus actually lacks regulation of hazardous substances that can get into goods from processed products, for example from recycled plastic. The situation is further complicated by the fact that waste recyclers often have no information on the detailed composition of a particular product or packaging.

As regards the sustainable management of chemicals in general, there is a need in Belarus to update its reporting on aspects related to the use of chemicals and the registration of chemicals in use, to improve the monitoring system, to improve coordination between regional government bodies and authorities concerned with their actions aimed at prioritising measures to minimize the negative impact of chemicals on human health and the environment and to address health protection priorities.

Example of NGO contribution. Research on Retardant Content in Toys (Centre for Environmental Solutions), 2017.

In April 2017, research was carried out to check on phthalate content in popular plastic children's toys bought in some countries, including in Belarus. The research results showed that all of the toys bought for analysis did contain phthalates, among them the ones prohibited for use on the territory of the country. A third of the samples had rather high phthalate concentrations; others also contained hazardous substances, if in smaller quantities, that might have found their way into the toys after contact with packaging or during the production process.

The manufacturers currently do not have to show the full composition of the material a toy is made of. There is no requirement to highlight substances dangerous for children's health either. The voluntary eco-labelling sometimes used by manufacturers does not always reflect the real situation.



Transfer of proposals for phthalates to the EURASIAN ECONOMIC COMMISSION, Moscow.
Photo: Russian Greenpeace

Example of NGO contribution.

Finding Solutions to the Problem of Expired Pharmaceutical Waste Entering the Environment (Centre for Environmental Solutions), 2015–2021.

For some years, starting in 2015, the Centre for Environmental Solutions has been working on the topic of environmental pollution with medicines and pharmaceutical products. It all started with a discussion on the topic among professionals and the naming of the problem. That was followed by research on behavioural trends in the population¹³, on pollution of natural reservoirs¹⁴ with this category of substances, and thematic information materials on the environmentally friendly treatment of medicines in medicine chests. In a matter of years, the first pilot collection bin for unneeded and expired medicines from residents was installed in Minsk on the initiative of the organisation's professionals; it demonstrated that people are ready to dispose of leftover medicines in the correct way.

Naturally, the activity led to changes at the governmental level when in 2020 new Rules of Household Waste Treatment in Belarus were adopted to accommodate for the treatment of medical waste. The Minsk City Council of Deputies decided to set up a public system for the collection of expired medication from residents.

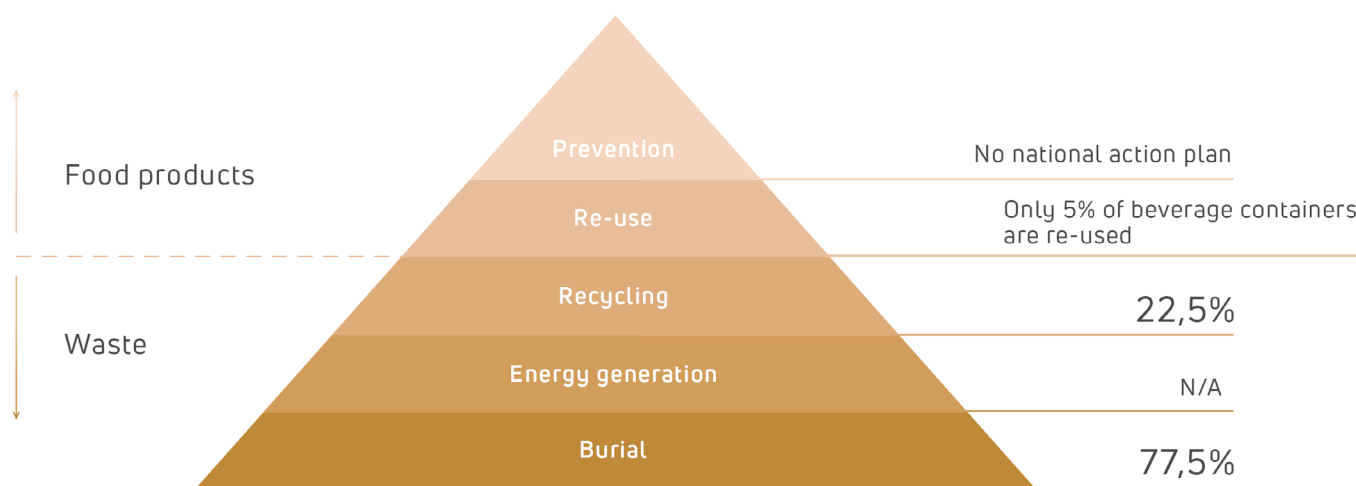


Container for waste collection of obsolete medicines, Minsk.
Photo: Tatiana Kuznetsova, CES

12.5 By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

It should be noted the target has only one national indicator: the share of used solid household waste in total solid household waste generation, in %, which, in our view, complicates the assessment of real target performance progress.

HIERARCHY OF SOLID HOUSEHOLD WASTE TREATMENT IN BELARUS



We note significant progress in the area of municipal waste management in Belarus, in particular in relation to improvements in the legislation in this area, further development of the system for the separate collection and processing of recyclable materials, a reduction in the use of disposable plastic goods, raising public awareness of the waste problem, the development of a system for expired medicine collection from residents, etc.

It is thus noteworthy that while the main effort is aimed at improving the collection and processing of recyclable materials, there is still insufficient progress in the area of waste generation prevention. We also believe that the planned actions related to the introduction of municipal waste incineration technology in Minsk and the production and use of RDF are actions that will help reduce the volume of waste. If implemented, the processes themselves will become a source of serious environmental pollution and complicate the implementation of measures related to waste generation prevention and reduction.

Individual key developments for the target:

- In 2017, a [National Strategy of Solid Household Waste and Recyclable Material Management](#)¹⁵ in the Republic of Belarus until 2035 was adopted.
- In 2020, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus approved a [Schedule of Measures Aimed at Phased Reduction of Polymer Packaging Use and Its Replacement with Environmentally Safe Packaging](#)¹⁶.
- In 2020, new [SHW Treatment Rules](#)¹⁷ in the Republic of Belarus were adopted.
- In 2020, a local-level decision was made by the Minsk City Council of Deputies [on development of a system of medicine waste collection from residents](#)¹⁸.
- In 2020, the first ever [detailed analysis of morphological composition of household waste](#)¹⁹, was carried out. It marked an important step towards the development of future sustainable waste treatment systems.
- From 1 January 2021, a [ban on use and sale of disposable plastic dishware at public catering facilities](#)²⁰ is in place (excluding products and objects made of paper, cardboard, wood, other natural materials or composite materials).

The performance of the target has been seriously affected since 2020 by the situation with COVID-19: in particular, it has already led to some substantial increase in the amount of non-recyclable waste generated by single-use protective equipment (i. e., masks, gloves and gowns).

Example of NGO contribution. The [My Cup, Please!](#) movement to reduce the amount of disposable containers used in public catering (founded by graduates from the Ekostart Youth Education Centre with support from the [Centre for Environmental Solutions](#) and [Green Network](#)), 2017-2021.

The My Cup, Please! public campaign is aimed at promoting multiple-use mugs instead of disposable cups. The initiative's team disseminates information about the noxious effects of disposable cups and explains how to select a durable multiple-use mug.

More than 115 public catering outlets (cafés, coffee shops, bars) have joined the movement and pour beverages into containers brought by visitors. This way they demonstrate their readiness to share environmentally friendly values, minimise waste and support customers willing to reduce their carbon footprint at all possible costs. Besides that, the outlets readily promote the ideas of the environmental campaign and can also offer some bonuses.

Example of NGO contribution. *Designing a strategy for waste management in the Minsk Oblast (Ecopartnership, IPO), 2015.*

Ecopartnership, IPO designed a strategy of waste management for one of the Belarus Raions and scaled up the approach to the Oblast level. The developed [Strategy for Integrated Management of Solid Municipal Waste for the Minsk Region](#)²¹ for 2015–2029 was approved by the Minsk Oblast Council of Deputies.

One component of the organisation’s comprehensive approach towards the topic of waste involves informing and promoting the best European experiences (e.g., disseminating green waste composting practices among utility companies and the public). The recommendations designed by the organisation are used in the Minsk Oblast.

Example of NGO contribution. [KaliLaska Charity Project](#), 2013–2021.

The KaliLaska Charity Project was started in 2013. It is the first charity shop in Belarus that distributes usable personal effects donated by people. These are sorted and the majority of clothing, shoe wear and essential goods are then distributed among those currently in need, like multi-child families or social institutions. A smaller (not more than 5%) proportion of garments is sold to financially support the project.

The project is growing: now, in 2021, at KaliLaska they have an upcycling shop to make new products out of the old ones. For example, they repair fashion jewellery, make environmentally friendly bags and decorations from clippings, old postcards, etc.



*Charitable store «KaliLaska», Minsk.
Photo: Yana Bondar, CES*

Example of NGO contribution. [Fighting micro-plastic pollution in Mogilev Oblast \(ENDO Mogilev Environmental Public Association\)](#), 2019–2021.

The ENDO Mogilev Environmental Public Association coordinates public initiatives working on the issue of micro-plastic pollution in the Mogilev Oblast. The activity includes reservoir surveys, and the design and implementation of awareness-raising activities.

12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.

It should be noted that the target has only one national indicator, the number of companies publishing reports on the sustainable use of resources, and the data for this indicator has not been uploaded to the National Reporting Platform. The reporting of companies certified according to ISO 14001 can be used as an additional source for target verification.

The Programme of Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025 sets a goal of providing environmentally friendly conditions for the livelihood of citizens, enhancing environmental protection and efficiently using natural resources. The greening of industry to ensure reduction of its negative impact on the environment, the re-use of waste (paper, glass, plastic, rechargeable batteries etc.) in economic turnover, and increasing the production and consumption of environmentally friendly (processed) products have been determined as necessary conditions for achieving the performance benchmarks. Measures have been outlined to develop mutually beneficial cooperation ties, for Belarusian cellulose processing into special types of paper and cardboard for the domestic packaging industry, for board products into furniture, and wood waste and low-grade raw wood materials into fuel pellets and briquettes.

The transition to a circular economy has accelerated in response to growing environmental challenges and the need for more sustainable and cleaner production. Such a political agenda, to promote circular economy development, has not yet been developed in Belarus but the concept is currently getting more and more traction. The draft National Strategy of Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2035 enshrines the transition towards a circular economy as a priority area of economic development within the framework of the transition to sustainable production and consumption models. The document emphasizes the need to create conditions for the development of the manufacturing sector and urban economy, on the principles of a circular economy with optimisation of consumed resource flows.

Currently, Belarus has only a few examples of circular business models being introduced. These are factories making office paper from recycled paper in the city of Borisov (Goznak Paper Mill Unitary Enterprise), processing waste oil in the Krupsky district of the Minsk Oblast, processing wood waste into biofuel in the city of Brest (PKUP Kommunalnik), and offering rental services (house, car, bicycle and scooter rental); biogas energy complexes based on processing agricultural waste in a number of agricultural organizations; implemented innovative projects to introduce low-waste technologies at industrial and metallurgy enterprises, etc.

Scaling up the transition towards a circular economy requires systemic changes and innovative business models for sustainable commercial operations. We have a significant gap in educating the business community about the opportunities that would motivate businesses to understand, adopt and implement innovative circular economy business models. At the same time, Belarusian businesses in general are aware of the importance of the implementation of circular initiatives at different stages of the production cycle, but are less informed about the possibilities of circular business models as such. This is evidenced by [the results of a study by the Centre for Economic Research BEROC on the possibilities of a circular transformation in Belarus](#)²² based on enterprise surveys. The obtained results show that high levels of capital and technological expenditures as well as the lack of economic incentives from the state are the most serious obstacles to circular economy development in Belarus. When it comes to prospects of businesses themselves to implement a circular transformation, the lack of funding becomes the major obstacle.

■ **Example of NGO contribution.**

*«Good Index, a Tool for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility Evaluation»
(Good Foundation), 2018–2021.*

The Good Index is a tool to evaluate corporate sustainability and responsibility, a digital indicator designed to evaluate/self-evaluate a company's progress in the areas of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. Companies are evaluated based on four groups of criteria: labour relations and human rights, good business practices, consumers and community involvement, and the environment. A total of 134 indicators are presented. Each company is assigned an index of social sustainability and responsibility (from 0 to 12) based on survey results. The introduction of the corporate social responsibility index was announced in 2018.

■ **Example of NGO contribution.**

*Adaptation of the German Sustainability Code
(International Association for Real Estate Management in Belarus), 2020–2021*

The German Sustainability Code (DNK) is an internationally applicable standard of reporting on aspects of sustainable development. While it is a voluntary instrument, the German federal government supports the promotion of this transparency standard thereby helping to establish sustainable business practices. The Code with its 20 criteria is harmonized with existing international voluntary reporting standards and is applicable to companies operating on global markets and businesses from other countries.

The International Association for Real Estate Management in Belarus [translated and adapted](#)²³ a sectoral annex to the Code on housing. A pilot phase of its implementation for reporting on regional associations is currently (2021) underway.

12.7 Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities.

The Law of the Republic of Belarus on Public Procurement of Goods (Works, Services) has been amended to include the environmentalisation of public procurement (in force from 1 July 2019).

“Methodological recommendations on Organising and Carrying Out Procurement of Goods (Works, Services) Using Green Procurement Principles (Government Procurement, Procurement From Own Funds and Procurement of Goods (Works, Services)) During Construction of Objects” have been developed.

To implement the public procurement environmentalisation principle set out in the Law of the Republic of Belarus on Public Procurement, a draft STB ISO 20400 has been developed. Sustainable Procurement. Guidelines have been designed by the Republican Unitary Enterprise Centre for International Environmental Projects, Certification and Audit, Ecologiainvest.

Generally, despite the already established legal regulatory framework, the mechanism of green procurement has not yet attained widespread use. Within the framework of the current electronic platform of the [National Marketing Centre](#), when selecting advanced

procurement search, one can select the number and the subject of procurement, its approximate cost, the tendering period and the type of procurement procedure. However, it is impossible to select only compliance with innovation and environmental friendliness requirements as a parameter in the search query.

Moreover, according to experts from the BEROC Centre for Economic Research, about 40% of respondents to a survey on the circular transformation of Belarusian businesses held in the third quarter of 2020 found it difficult to answer the question about the nature of green procurement, which is indicative of the need to advocate for this green economy instrument, promote its nature and disseminate mechanisms for its practical implementation.

12.8 By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature

This target has one national indicator, which, in our opinion, is very difficult to assess. Besides, the data for this indicator has not been uploaded to the National Reporting Platform.

We should note the growing interest among the population of Belarus in information about the environment, environmentally friendly lifestyles, and sustainable development. This is due to many factors, including:

- closer attention of the media (including youth media) and online information resources to environmental issues (tut.by, greenbelarus.info, zautra.by, citydog.by and others);
- an increasing number of podcasts, blogs, forums, and social media pages touching upon various issues of the environmental agenda and addressed to various groups of people;
- the growing professionalism of teachers and trainers of formal and informal education resulting in a variety of specific projects of local and national importance (focused on healthy nutrition, consumption habits, waste, mobility, or tourism). These projects use the principles of inclusiveness, gender equality, and civic activism.

The initiative of the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Association helps to strengthen the expertise of both the organizers and participants of these processes by consolidating findings of studies, best practices, and experience of various players in involving different groups of residents in sustainable development processes based on ESD methodology. For example, in close cooperation with Belarus State Pedagogical University, the ESD team published a joint monograph, *Education for Sustainable Development in Belarus: Theory & Practice*¹.

People are becoming more and more concerned with adopting an environmentally responsible attitude towards their activities and surroundings. Various crisis situations (such as accidents or disasters) or everyday household problems (unauthorized garbage dumps near a house/allotment, disposal of household waste, etc.) most often encourage them to look for resources, information, and opportunities to cope with problems they face.

Nevertheless, a significant number of people in Belarus are still not fully aware of the close relationship between human activities and the state of the environment. They do not have sufficient knowledge about acting on their right to free access to information and participation in the environmental decision-making process. People appear to have a rather high interest in studying information on environmental issues but still tend to be reluctant to search for such information on their own.

For more details on the current situation, please refer to the report [Results of a nationwide survey of civil servants, business entities, civil society organizations and the wider public about their awareness of the Aarhus Convention, the exercise of the right to receive environmental information, their engagement in environmental monitoring and making socially important environmental decisions](#)²⁴ made in 2020 as part of the EU-funded Project on [Civic Engagement in Environmental Monitoring and Improving Environmental Management at the Local Level](#)²⁵ implemented in 2018–2022 by the United Nations Development Program in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus.

The projects involving the wider public in compiling data sets and accessing this data (i.e. environmental monitoring and crowdmapping) also contribute to raising environmental awareness and developing “citizen science”. These projects include [Water Control](#), [AirMQ](#), [IBA Caretakers](#), and [Green Dozor](#), to name but a few.

¹ Образование в интересах устойчивого развития в Беларуси: теория и практика / под науч. ред. А.И. Жука, Н.Н.Кошель, С.Б.Савеловой – Минск: БГПУ, 2015 – 640 с. [Education for Sustainable Development in Belarus: Theory & Practice / under scientific editorship of A. I. Zhuk, N. N. Koshel, S. B. Savelova – Minsk: BSPU, 2015 – 640 p.]

Public initiatives run by NGOs ([APB BirdLife Belarus](#), [Green Network](#), [Center for Environmental Solutions](#), [Ecodom](#), [International Public Association Ecopartnership](#), [Education for Sustainable Development Association](#), [Bagna](#) and others) as well as schools, which are active members of network communities ([Green Schools](#), Partner Network of Schools for Sustainable Development, SPARE and others), play an important role in implementing Target 12.8 by raising public awareness of environmental issues.

All educational and cultural institutions, libraries, environmental NGOs, regional centers for adult education, etc., raise the public's environmental awareness to one degree or another. The educational network Green Schools got extensive promotion as part of the EU/UNDP educational project. At the beginning of 2021, more than 300 educational institutions studied biodiversity, energy and water conservation, waste management and air quality, and held environmental awareness events. The number of schools awarded with the Green School Certificate had more than doubled by 2020: 98 schools held Degree I, II, or III Green School Diploma in 2020 (*including 23 in the Brest region, 20 in Grodno Oblast, 15 in the Vitebsk Oblast, 14 in Minsk Oblast, 12 in Gomel Oblast, 10 in Mogilev Oblast, and 4 in Minsk*) against 40 in 2019.

It is NGOs and schools that most often become partners in raising the awareness of local communities and organizations with regard to sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature. NGOs act as sources of new information and experience, initiate translations, and develop guidelines for environmental protection and education for sustainable development, while schools become sources of local knowledge and expertise, traditional for a specific territory, and operate as local hubs for sharing knowledge, introducing new practices, and providing advanced training for teachers, people, and regional experts. In the regions, active school teachers committed to improving the quality of life at the local level often take on the role of project initiators and mediators between local communities, local authorities, and NGOs so that the local community becomes more socially and environmentally responsible and the young return to their home towns and settlements.

Projects and educational programs implemented with the equal participation of NGOs and schools help (provided there are favorable conditions) to inform and engage various stakeholder groups (schools involve parental initiatives, local organizations and institutions, the business sector, and government bodies, while NGOs bring together active youth, ecoactivists, journalists, etc.) and strengthen their networking and motivation to join local projects at the local level.



*Water testing for nitrates in Borisov district.
Photo: Elena Shubarо*

In terms of education on sustainable consumption and production, Belarus has two main focus areas:

1) Raising knowledge and awareness of environmental issues:

- Incorporation of environmental awareness programs, courses, and electives into the system of general secondary, higher and vocational education (at the initiative of teachers, subject to mandatory approval by the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Education, and other institutions).
- Open lectures, workshops, trainings, and summer schools to provide advanced training for teaching staff and to involve the youth (see NGOs listed above).
- Information events (round table discussions, press conferences, social advertising, eco-challenges, or promotional events) held by state and international organizations (European Union, UNDP Belarus, the Support Programme of Belarus of the Federal Government of Germany / Minsk International Educational Center). The campaign run by a government agency [Operator of Secondary Material Resource – Target 99](#) (the most visible movement promoting segregated waste collection and recycling) is a good example of such an information campaign.
- Information campaigns and events which promote the Sustainable Development Goals among various groups of people, e.g., online games and the youth media festival Voices of Young People for Sustainable Development (ESD Association); the project Local Strategies are the Right of Everyone (New Eurasia Foundation); and training programs, in particular A Good Neighbour (Office for European Expertise and Communication).



Educational exhibition about waste «Zawtra».
Photo: Denis Zelenko, CES

2) Involvement of the people in active environmental initiatives and projects:

- Environmental monitoring: AIRMQ projects (MinskSmartCity, NGO Ecodom), [Water Control](#) (Center for Environmental Solutions), [IBA Caretakers](#) (NGO APB BirdLife Belarus).
- Crowdmapping: compiling and using interactive web maps to improve the sustainability of people's lifestyles, e.g. projects Green Map and [ZeroWaste Map](#) (Centre for Environmental Solutions), climate crowdmapping (ESD Association).
- Waste-free lifestyle: My Cup, Please! Initiative and KaliLaska Charity Project.
- Sustainable mobility: the projects Bicycle Kitchen Garage 38, Business Bike, Bike School, rovar.info, Dobry Rovar and others (NGO [Minsk Bicycle Association](#)).



Community bike workshop «Garage 38»
Photo - Nadezhda Dubovskaia, CES

It should also be noted that the integration of the principles of sustainable development into the activities of schools, NGOs, or other institutions promoting environmentally responsible lifestyles is very important for this target, i.e. it is essential to create role models and examples of how sustainable consumption and production can be integrated into the activities of an organization.

For more detailed information on sustainable development projects implemented by educational institutions in cooperation with NGOs, please refer to [National Progress Report for 2015–2017 by Priority Activities of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development](#)²⁶.

Example of an NGO contribution.

Information materials and media products about environmental issues, 2010– 2021

Non-profit organizations develop and distribute information materials in support of the issues within the focus of their professional interests, make collections of useful materials, and translate current research and articles into Russian.

In addition, many organizations have online resources with regular updates of environmental information, such as www.ecoidea.by, www.greenbelarus.info, www.ptushki.org, www.ecohome-ngo.by, www.ecopartnerstvo.by, www.wildlife.by and www.bahna.land.

Example of an NGO contribution. Educational Programme Man and Creation (The Centre for Environmental Solutions), 2014 –2021

Established in 2014, the Man and Creation Programme helps Christian churches in Belarus to develop environmental activities and implement the environmental recommendations and ideas expressed in the official documents of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. As part of the program, parishes throughout Belarus regularly hold various educational events, and ecological paths are created for educational purposes in different regions of the country.

The program runs a website www.tvorenie.by about the role of Christianity in addressing environmental issues where recommendations, advice, news, and other information, mainly on church and environmental activities, can be found.



An eco-trail in the Svyato-Yeliseyevskoe Lavryszewski Monastery, Grodno Region
Photo: Andrei Kot, CES

Example of the contribution of an NGO and educational institutions. Movement Plastic-Free Schools (initiated by Gymnasium No. 19 in Minsk and the ESD Association), 2019–2021.

The Plastic-Free School initiative promotes environmental activities at educational institutions to encourage schools to refuse single-use plastics. By joining the initiative, schools demonstrate their commitment to initiate transformations by re-organizing their common practices. For example, schools can use ceramic mugs instead of plastic cups in classrooms and install a water filtering system to drink tap water instead of procuring bottled water, etc. Educational institutions can receive certain informational support upon their request, such as consultations by experts from the Centre for Environmental Solutions; assistance in conducting an initial audit on the use of disposable plastic at school; specific consultations on measures to be taken to reduce the use of plastic; conducting an educational lecture on the use of plastic at the school; educational materials for teachers and posters for interior decoration, etc.



Movement «Plastic-Free Schools», initiated by Gymnasium No. 19 in Minsk
Photo: Yulia Semenchenko, CES

Example of an NGO contribution. Educational course *Events for Future* (Minsk Johannes Rau International Centre for Education, Dortmund International Education Centre, and the Centre for Environmental Solutions), 2020–2021.

The materials of the educational course Events for Future describe in detail how sustainable and inclusive events should be held and give practical advice on how to organize any event to promote sustainable development and support ecological balance, social equity, and economic prosperity. The course contains many examples and recommendations on where to start and how to hold such events, including real-life cases of what NGOs have already done in Belarus.

For more detailed recommendations, please refer to [Sustainable Event Management Guide](#)²⁷.

Example of a contribution of educational institutions. *Business Ideas at Schools*, 2018–2021

Educational institutions, in particular schools, often initiate projects aimed at developing the potential of students and their entrepreneurial skills based on the ideas of sustainable development. For example, some schools have launched student business campaigns and youth business incubators in various business segments, such as beekeeping, sewing, crop production, and bicycle maintenance services. Some good examples of such practices can be seen at several educational institutions: Zditovo Secondary School, Bereza district, Brest region; Khodosy Secondary School, Mstislavy district, Mogilev region; Orsha Secondary School No. 16 in Orsha, and others.

12.a Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacities to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production

This target was recognized as irrelevant to Belarus. Nevertheless, we believe that Belarus, with a good track record of projects in this area, can already provide some assistance to developing countries to help them move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production. Civil society organizations have significant experience in sustainable consumption and production that may be in demand in other countries.

12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism, which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products.

In Belarus, the development of ecotourism, a fast-growing market segment, relies on the potential of unique natural landscapes, specially protected natural areas (SPNAs), vast experience, leadership, and continuing government support. To support further development of ecological tourism, consider the implementation of a comprehensive set of measures in various areas, including the components discussed below:

- elaboration of strategies for the development of ecotourism for each SPNA within the SPNA network recognized as having potential for the recreation sector;
- construction and operation of SPNA visit centres (environmental, educational, tourist info centres), viewpoints, and development of ecological routes;
- regulation of man-induced impacts on SPNAs, including the establishment of standards for permissible man-induced impacts on SPNAs based on research studies and further compliance control;
- taking measures to restore regional natural landscapes affected by man-made impacts;
- strengthening the capacity of the SPNA administrative staff by adding experts in tourism development.

The Set of Measures for the Development and Promotion of Ecological Tourism in SPNAs until 2025 signed on February 14, 2017 by former Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Rusy (No. 06/214-33/94) and other regulations promoting the development of agricultural and ecological tourism are a good example of positive practice in Belarus.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection has approved a List of Specially Protected Natural Areas Recognized as Having Potential for Tourism Development. These guidelines and recommendations should be taken into account when ecological routes and flows of tourist groups are planned.

We note the growing interest in developing green routes, ecological trails, and other local infrastructure for people interested in nature and environmental issues.

The key lessons learned from our negative experience include:

The draft National Strategy for Tourism Development until 2035 does not specify what is meant by the term “ecological tourism”. As ecological tourism develops, it can be challenging to create and implement tools for monitoring the impact on sustainable development.

Difficulties in communicating with SPNA administrations. One example is the state nature protection institutions – the National Park Belovezhskaya Pushcha and the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve – that behave like monopolists in the ecotourism services market and restrict cooperation with other entities: they do not allow third-party tour guides to enter their territories and do not communicate with local agricultural estates. In general, we note the problem of unequal competition between state nature protection institutions and private tour guides. In our opinion, the role of the state in this matter should mainly be restricted to creating conditions for the development of ecological tourism.

Competence of tour guides. Although SPNAs often get payment for tourist visits and accompanying tourist groups, their staff do not always have sufficient competencies to conduct a high-quality guided tour, in particular in a foreign language.

The development of hunting tourism can be in conflict with ecotourism development, in particular, the authorized spring hunting creates a negative image for the country and affects the decision of ecological tourists to visit the natural territory.

The deteriorating state of the republican landscape reserve Svityazyansky (Lake Svityaz) caused by excessive man-made impacts is the most striking example of the negative impact of tourism on wetlands in Belarus. In the high tourist season, the lake is attended by up to eight thousand people per day that is far beyond the optimal number and permissible burden.

The analysis of advertising materials of the National Tourism Agency shows that Belarus still does not recognize its nature as a major asset for the development of tourism. There is no assessment of the competitive environment, strengths, and weaknesses of Belarus compared to other tourist destinations; there is no understanding of TA groups and their needs. The tourist information infrastructure focuses mainly on Russian-speaking visitors.

We would like to note that the ecotourism sector lacks tour guides, in particular those who can accompany foreign ecotourists and show them certain species of animals and birds. One of the reasons is the lack of a system for training tour guides for the ecotourism sector.

Example of an NGO contribution.

Development of rural tourism (Belarusian Association Country Escape), 2003–2021

Since 2003, NGO Country Escape has been working on the development of rural areas in cooperation with rural communities, trying to improve the economic and social activities of the latter. In particular, the organization brings together people who live in the countryside and want to engage in rural tourism, and are willing to organize mini-hotels in their estates and homes.

The organization provides, among other things, training for rural entrepreneurs, e.g., through the program for farmstead owners Laboratory of Rural Tourism. The program provides training at three levels (basic, advanced, and specialized training sessions) using local experience and best foreign practices with a special focus on aspects specific to the development of rural tourism.

It is important to note that Country Escape encourages local communities to work together to create unique travel products that will be much sought-after all over the world. Ecotourism and [green routes](#) are the top priority of the work.

Example of an NGO contribution. Development of bird watching tourism
(NGO APB BirdLife Belarus unitary enterprise APB-Birdlife Wetland Centre), 2016–2021

The key objective of the Wetland Centre is to develop people's interest in wildlife, which, in the long run, contributes to wildlife conservation.

For this purpose, the organization offers a variety of ecotourism products. For example, it organizes educational courses, lectures, training and guided tours to study and watch birds and wildlife; conducts on- and offsite wildlife and birdwatching events, individual and group birdwatching and wildlife tours, and offers consulting services in ornithology and nature conservation.

The Wetland Centre uses its profit to preserve the wildlife in Belarus.



*A birdwatching excursion.
Photo: APB-Birdlife Wetland Centre*

12.c Rationalise inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimising the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and affected communities.

The national indicator uploaded to the Reporting Platform for this target shows that Belarus is gradually reducing the amount of government subsidies for the use of peat briquettes starting from 0.04% in 2011 to 0.02% in 2019 per unit of GDP. Please note that the Belarus Statistical Committee does not make clear what exactly the unit of GDP is in this definition.

According to the website of the Belarus Statistical Committee, subsidies for solid fuels (peat briquettes) have halved between 2011 and 2019. Nevertheless, [according to the Belarus Statistical Committee](#)²⁸, Belarus' GDP amounted to BYN134,732 million in 2019. With [peat briquette consumption of 962 thousand tons reported in 2019](#)²⁹, the subsidies amounted to BYN28 per ton of peat briquette consumption, while [the market value of a peat briquette was BYN95 to BYN105 per ton](#)³⁰, so the subsidy is about 30% of the cost of a peat briquette, which is still fairly high.

The above considerations do not take into account subsidies for other types of fuel, such as natural gas, electricity, and heat for households and certain types of industrial consumers. Subsidies for these fuels are available through a cross-subsidisation system rather than by making direct payments from the budget; however, administrative support to keep prices for energy resources at below-market levels leads to excessive consumption of energy resources or reduces incentives to improve energy efficiency. Subsidies available to households for consumption of electric and thermal energy increase consumption of these resources and the overall fuel consumption for the production of energy resources, which, at this point of time, are almost entirely fossil fuels.

[The electricity tariff is BYN0.28666/kWh for industrial consumers and BYN0.23/kWh for households³¹](#). Although the tariff scale is quite diverse, and this report considers the most popular tariff plans, the number of electricity tariffs has expanded recently to serve various purposes. Notably, all new consumers get a certain reduction in the tariff relative to the average cost of electricity production. The use of double-rate tariffs is not a subsidy, since electricity produced at more efficient plants is consumed at a cheaper tariff, but energy-intensive consumers can enjoy special tariffs, which are always much lower than those for industrial consumers. The entities consuming over 275 million kWh per year may pay as little as BYN0.10702 per kWh from 11:00 p.m. to 06:00 a.m. (i.e. almost three times lower than the tariff for industrial consumers with a capacity of up to 750 kVA) and as low as BYN0.12301 per kWh at any other point in time (that is more than two times lower).

The situation with the consumption of thermal energy appears to be similar: the tariff for thermal energy for households is BYN20.6216 per Gcal from January 1 through May 31 and BYN21.9245 per Gcal from June 1 through December 31, while the tariff for thermal energy for heating and hot water supply needs, which provides full reimbursement of economically justified costs, is BYN107.31 per Gcal. Therefore, the subsidisation of heat energy consumption is more than 80%. While the heat supply is provided in large cities by entities of the State Production Association Belenergo, which can cross-subsidise industrial consumers and households, the situation in towns looks different – subsidies are provided from local budgets. Wood and other biomass (30%), natural gas (68%) and peat, and other types of fossil fuels (2%) make up the structure of fuel consumption in boiler houses of the district housing and communal services network.

The situation with natural gas consumption appears to be similar: tariffs for households are also significantly lower and discourage individuals from implementing energy-efficient measures to heat private buildings. For example, natural gas costs BYN136-140 per thousand cubic meters for households against BYN560 for legal entities. It should also be noted that there are legal entities, consumers of natural gas, which enjoy other tariffs. For example, manufacturers of woollen fabrics buy natural gas for BYN214.

These considerations suggest the following conclusions. Moving towards the reduction of subsidies for peat briquette production has a positive effect on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. A significant number of subsidies (existing both as cross subsidies and direct payments from local budgets) are not taken into account in assessing the process of achieving SDG 12. However, the amount of subsidies that are not taken into account significantly exceeds subsidies for peat briquette production.

KEY CONCLUSIONS, ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES

Sustainable Development Goal 12 is one of the backbone goals in the overall SDG framework and combines many complex and ambitious goals that require considerable resources and capacity to achieve them all. We note the overall positive nature of the efforts taken towards achieving SDG 12 in Belarus. We believe that the greatest progress towards achieving SDG 12 has been seen in targets 12.1 (Sustainable production and consumption), 12.4 (Rational use of chemicals), 12.5 (Reducing waste), and 12.8 (Information and education).

We also note that the idea of sustainable production and consumption has not yet got sufficient systemic and comprehensive support at the political level in Belarus, in particular through economic incentives. As a consequence, we are now seeing the implementation of stand-alone activities and tasks related SDG 12.

In our opinion, the situation with the formal indicators within the SDG framework does not allow us to fully assess the country's progress towards one or another SDG. The existing indicators (both global and national) do not allow us in all cases to assess the country's progress in specific targets in a comprehensive and high-quality manner but rather give a formal overview (e.g. we consider that the action plan is in place but do not consider its content or process of implementation). Thus, the existing reporting on SDG 12 aims to capture the implementation of the minimum level of mandatory requirements but leaves open the question of the level of overall progress.

We believe that Belarus has made progress in the implementation of SDG 12, especially in those areas where different stakeholders, such as the government, business sector, and civil society, are involved.

The lessons learned by Belarus while moving towards SDG 12 show that NGOs have a high capacity to participate in activities aimed at achieving SDGs. To enhance NGOs' contribution to SDG 12, it is important to improve the framework conditions for NGO activities, in particular to enhance opportunities for attracting funding for their initiatives.

While working on this review, we found it important to do periodic reviews of how all SDGs are implemented in Belarus, both by the government and by the civil society sector.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a framework to regularly assess progress towards SDGs in Belarus. Such a framework could include regular progress reports submitted on specific SDGs by responsible government bodies to the Council for Sustainable Development for further discussion as well as the preparation of regular civil society reports as an important form of public participation.
- Develop and implement additional national indicators for specific targets within the SDG 12 framework to allow a more detailed assessment of the progress achieved.
- Strengthen the interaction between SDG 12 activities and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development by linking SDG targets and NSSD activities.
- Support NGOs and bottom-up initiatives, including initiatives of educational institutions, to implement SDG 12. In this context, it is essential to recognize the role of NGOs in the development of environmental, social, and educational spheres of life and encourage NGO activities, in particular by providing support from the state budget, simplifying project registration procedures, and contracting NGO experts as lecturers in professional development programs for teachers at state educational institutions, etc.
- Regularly assess national processes in sustainable production and consumption for compliance with current international processes and initiatives, such as the European Green Deal, the 10-year Framework Program for Sustainable Consumption and Production, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY SPECIFIC TARGET

12.1 Sustainable production and consumption

- Elaborate a national strategy and an action plan for the development of a circular economy in Belarus.
- Develop efficient and environmentally friendly technologies.
- Strengthen national capacities for environmental certification and labelling.
- In order to expand the use of the green procurement tool, we consider it expedient to develop and enforce environmental requirements for goods (works, services) at the legislative level;
- In order to encourage manufacturers to consider environmental aspects in the development of production processes and products, including packaging, implement the requirements for ecodesign at the legislative level (if appropriate, as part of the Directive of the President of the Republic of Belarus on Ecodesign with due consideration of Directive 2009/125/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of October 21, 2009).

- Assess the impact of the requirements of the EU Green Deal on Belarus and take measures to introduce similar requirements (if appropriate) in the legal framework of Belarus.

12.2 Efficient use of natural resources

- Elaborate and formalize in legislation the definition of rational utilization and efficient use of natural resources.
- Increase the economic responsibility of industrial companies for environmental pollution.
- Refuse to implement projects that pose great threats to the environment and ecosystem resources (such as the construction of the E40 transport route).

12.3 Food waste

- Initiate a study of the current situation in the food sector and update the annual reporting of FAO's [Production Loss and Food Waste Indices](#)³².
- Raise key government agencies' awareness about the problem of food loss and waste.
- Develop an action plan to reduce food loss in Belarus.
- Introduce economic incentives (tax exemptions and subsidies) for businesses and organizations transitioning to sustainable food surplus management patterns.
- Create favourable conditions for the functioning of food banks in Belarus.
- Encourage the study of relevant international experience and research on how to prevent food waste.

12.4 Sound management of chemicals

- Improve national legislation in chemical management (in particular, the GHS classification and labelling of chemicals, regulation of certain groups of substances (highly hazardous pesticides, endocrine disruptors, nanomaterials, etc.), and biomonitoring).
- Establish a register of chemicals and mixtures used in Belarus.
- Ensure that the 'polluter pays' principle, 'no data, no market' principle, precautionary principle, and 'right to know' principle are implemented and applied to chemicals.
- Introduce the principle of chemical management throughout the product life cycle.
- Create a system for post-authorization and post-marketing monitoring of chemicals and compounds, including chemicals contained in goods.
- Join the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides.
- Join the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

- Stop using lead in the production of household paints and varnishes.
- Establish an interagency and inter-sector coordination mechanism for chemical management (involving NGOs).

12.5 Waste reduction

- Develop an action plan to prevent waste generation in Belarus (in accordance with the Strategy for SMR Management until 2035).
- Create a system for the collection and processing of organic municipal waste.
- Do not provide government support for waste incineration projects. Instead, support infrastructure for waste prevention, minimization, and recycling.
- Continue activities reducing the use of disposable plastic products (in particular, ban the use of thin plastic bags).
- Revise the system of waste management indicators in the national forecast documents by adding an indicator measuring the reduction of municipal waste generation.
- Ban the use of non-recyclable or difficult-to-recycle containers and packaging. Replace them with reusable or easily recyclable alternatives.
- Introduce a requirement to increase the service life of durable products to achieve targets for reducing waste generation.
- Develop a system for collecting expired medicines from the people in the regions of Belarus. Ensure the cities/districts develop strategies for handling expired medicines.
- Require government and commercial companies (including FMCG sector and retail chains) to disclose and publish information on the rational use of resources, including waste generation and plastic pollution. Publish goals, action plans and indicators on sustainable production methods (including waste reduction and prevention).

12.6 Sustainable production methods

- Provide monitoring and expert analysis. Promote and support the implementation of EU standards related to the circular economy in Belarus.
- Organize a broad awareness campaign for the business community in Belarus concerning how innovative business models may be built on a circular economy.
- Support the development of enterprise-specific circular economy action plans, supported by appropriate indicators. The indicators for transition to a circular economy should be developed as quantitative indicators for companies operating in any business sector, at any position within the value chain and having any size to consistently measure their circularity and understand problems and business opportunities.
- Support analytics and research on the circular economy in Belarus.

12.7 Sustainable procurements

- Promote a green procurement tool among all potential stakeholders in Belarus.
- In order to expand the use of the green procurement tool, we consider it reasonable to develop and legislate the environmental requirements for goods (works, services).

12.8 Information and awareness

To improve the situation with regard to public awareness of sustainable development and promoting lifestyles in harmony with nature, consider a variety of activities, including:

- strengthening the capacity of bottom-up initiatives implemented in cooperation with various stakeholders – representatives of civil society, education, government, business, science sectors, etc.;
- participatory initiatives to involve people in the development of environmental solutions and decision-making processes at the local level;
- sharing experience and good practices at the international, national, and local levels;
- ensuring that media, including social media users, contribute to promoting environmentally responsible lifestyles;
- the involvement of young people in sharing information and raising the awareness of adults;
- social advertising to raise environmental awareness.

We consider it important that the government, business sector, and other stakeholders provide support (such as financial, administrative, and informational) to these activities.

Furthermore, we would like to emphasize that the models integrating the principles of sustainable consumption (such as a green office), which are developed and implemented by various organizations as part of their activities, as well as events held in line with the principles of environmental friendliness should become an important indicator of the country's progress in this direction rather than methodological recommendations and course programs on education for sustainable development. At all levels of the educational system, attention should be paid to supporting the general institutional approach to ESD recommended by the UNECE and UNESCO experts and encouraging the work of teachers who contribute to the successful implementation of this approach at the local level.

Please consider the importance of expanding the range of environmental topics in educational activities.

12b Tourism development

- Study the global market (carry out market research) to identify the Belarusian landscapes, flora and fauna, and natural sites capable of attracting consumers and encouraging foreign tourists to visit Belarus. The study should include the demographic profiling of an ecotourist. Develop routes and offers based on the findings of the study.
- Ecological tourism should contribute to the conservation of nature, while the profit from ecotourism should remain in the budget of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks to protect nature and improve the qualifications of the workforce.
- Strengthen the protected status of SPNAs to preserve their tourist potential, and prevent damage to SPNAs by infrastructure projects. For example, the E40 project (construction of a shipping lane through Pripjat) will destroy the landscape of Polesye, unique for Europe and the whole world, and minimize the high tourism potential of this region. The National Tourism Development Strategy should take into account that the interest in hunting tourism in the world decreases as generations change, while the demand for ecological tourism rises. Set priorities bearing this consideration in mind.
- Consider the introduction of visa-free movement by rail for foreign citizens and the expansion of rail routes with EU member states as a good way to attract foreign tourists. As the problem of climate change has become a growing concern over recent years, the demand of EU citizens, including those traveling to Belarus, for passenger transportation by rail is also growing.
- In order to improve the quality of tourism services (and the country's image as a traveling destination), use financial (economic) incentives to encourage the tourism workforce to work better. Otherwise, hotel and catering staff would hardly be efficient and flexible in doing their job and develop skills and competencies to serve tourists and promote hospitality.

- Along with direct environmental measures, consider involving the local community and entrepreneurs in the development of ecotourism. This will open up opportunities for local communities to get extra income and enhance their interest in preserving unique nature. To encourage such involvement, consider training programs, support for small and medium-sized businesses, voluntary certification systems for green tourist routes, sites, and products.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NGOS

Civil society organizations are the key agents moving the SDG 12 value agenda forward in Belarus. Many organizations have considerable experience in the successful implementation of projects related to sustainable production and consumption, strong expertise, tools, and horizontal networking and contacts to succeed in this area.

To continue working on the implementation of SDG 12 in Belarus, we recommend:

- strengthening horizontal cooperation between various civil society organizations involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Belarus;
- strengthening cross-thematic cooperation between organizations working in the field of environmental protection, social support, and the economy;
- promoting the principles of a circular economy, the zero waste principle, and environmentally friendly lifestyles among the people of Belarus;
- strengthening cooperation between NGOs and businesses to address specific targets within the SDG 12 framework;
- developing tools for involving the wider public in environmental activities, including in independent environmental monitoring and control;
- initiating and conducting public reviews of progress achieved towards the SDGs in Belarus.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITIZENS

No progress in achieving SDG 12 in Belarus is possible without the active participation of citizens, and this is especially true with regard to sustainable consumption. We recommend that all people follow the principles of environmental friendliness in their everyday life. There is now a lot of information with specific advice on eco-friendly consumption, which can be found online (for example, on the websites of environmental organizations).

A few basic recommendations include:

- Try not to buy disposable items and items in disposable packaging whenever reusable options are available.
- Consider buying products and packaging that can be reused or recycled in Belarus.
- Use goods and services created in support of the concept of the sharing economy.
- Give unnecessary but still usable clothing, items, and food to other people.
- Repair things where possible.
- Try to reduce waste generation. Sort waste into containers for separate waste collection.
- Support public environmental organizations implementing sustainable production and consumption initiatives.

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