

## PROJECT FICHE

Title	Support to Environment and Sustainable Development in Belarus		
Total cost	€ 1,5 million		
Aid Method	Sector Policy Support Programme – centralised		
DAC-code	41010	Environment	

### 1. RATIONALE

#### 1.1. Strategic framework

The goals of the Commission strategy in the countries that are neighbours to the enlarged Union include supporting the pursuit of sustainable development and overall environmental protection, with particular emphasis on achieving implementation of the agreements made at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development of September 2002. The Commission proposes to pursue a regionally differentiated environmental policy with the close European neighbours through the development of the environmental provisions included in the bilateral agreements that the EU has signed with these individual countries, such as - the Communications from the Commission on “Wider Europe Neighbourhood: A new Frame for relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours (COM(2003) 1004 final 11.03.2003)” and on “European Neighbourhood Policy” (ENP) Strategy Paper (COM(2004) 373 final 12.05.2004).

In addition, environmental co-operation will also be further developed through sub-regional approaches initiated and promoted by the Commission. Such networks of cooperation include the EU Northern Dimension, the Regional Reconstruction Environmental Programme (REReP) in the Balkans and the Danube-Black Sea Task Force. Belarus is already eligible to participate in three of the Neighbourhood Programmes (Baltic Sea Programme, Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus, Poland-Ukraine-Belarus).

#### 1.2. Lessons learnt

In general the dynamics of co-operation in the field of environment has a positive trend. However, there is a need to increase level and effectiveness of the bilateral cooperation focusing on concrete projects to achieve long-term goals and objectives of the Parties.

A few Tacis Regional projects in Environment were implemented in Belarus during the last years. Among them were: “*Joint river management programme. Pripjat basin component*” (AP 1999); “*Environmental information, education and public awareness*” (AP 2000).

The main lessons learnt and problems identified were the following:

i) The water legislation and institutions of Belarus are not very much in line with EU legislation and, in particular, reforms are needed to facilitate river basin planning and management.

ii) The organisation of information provision. This refers mainly a lack of clarity on where information is available, technical difficulties in collecting information, and the need for compatible methodologies and more co-ordinated co-operation to ensure better information flows within and between agencies and Ministries.

iii) Lack of technical capacity for the easy communication and dissemination of information. This was addressed through the provision of computer equipment, Internet access and other equipment for use by the national team to support the work of the Aarhus Focal Point in Belarus. However, the lack of equipment remains a chronic and ongoing problem that has a significant impact on the implementation of the convention.

iv) The absence of a culture of participation. Although NGOs were aware of the Aarhus Convention, when the project began, there was a low level of interest among the general public in acquiring information and participating in decision making. The reasons given for this were that the public was not aware of environmental issues and they do not feel empowered to act as there is a lack of trust in authorities and lack of confidence in proper processes being followed.

v) Weak enforcement measures, lack of enforcement by agencies, lack of practice in access to justice by the population, and low awareness among the judiciary of the rights granted by the Aarhus Convention.

vi) Lack of procedural norms. Although Belarus has a sufficient framework of legislation to ensure the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, the lack of procedural norms and mechanisms for implementation, meant that the Convention was not being implemented in practice.

vii) Lack of clear requirements for public participation. Although the convention requires public participation in decision making and in Belarus there is some provision for public participation on specific activities, there were no clear requirements for public participation in particular in what is known as strategic environmental assessment (SEA) namely in plans, programmes and policies.

Referring to the experience gained from the assistance provided under the mentioned and other Tacis activities in the country it worth to be underlined that their implementation was partly hampered not only by the low priority given to environmental issues in Belarus, but also by the lack of a strong EU stand on environmental issues resulting in mostly low programmes impact despite the fact that the programmes components were highly relevant to the identified problems.

### **1.3. Complementary actions**

*EC intervention:*

**TACIS:** The Commission is funding under the Regional Action Programme 2002 a project that is meant to provide the technical assistance to Belarus and Ukraine with respect to their global climate change commitments as well as to facilitate in establishing of their national Joint Implementation secretariats under the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Convention on global climate change.

Within the TACIS Regional multi - annual indicative programme 2004-06 ( € 35 Mio) were allocated to the implementation of water-related programmes in the EECCA (including Belarus) with the following objectives:.

- Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS), including investments in infrastructure. Projects under this category are mostly at local and municipal level. The target objective is to contribute to the achievement of the Johannesburg goals for improved access to water and sanitation.
- Establishing and strengthening Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the EECCA by 2005. This pillar deals both with national and trans-national water resources management issues with the aim of adopting integrated and sustainable approach to the use of water and land within a country and among neighbouring countries.

**DG ENV:** the Environment Directorate-General of the Commission has commissioned a study – “Guide to the Convergence of Environmental Legislation in NIS”, which will be published in 2005. This is intended as a “road-map” to help NIS countries that wish to converge their legislation to that of the EU to decide their strategy.

**EU – OECD (EAP Task Force):** The aim of this 1.5 million euro project is to assist NIS to implement selected activities identified in the NIS partnership strategy, in particular: water supply and sanitation, public environmental finance and environmental policy reform (permitting, compliance etc), and some Task Force management support.

#### **1.4. Donor coordination**

This project will allow implementing activities and reach the results which have been identified together with the UNDP as particularly valuable in Belarus’ current environmental, legislative and external assistance context.

## **2. COUNTRY CONTEXT**

### **2.1. Economic and social situation**

The Republic of Belarus undergoes a fragile economic development process. Economic growth slowed over the recent past due to failure in addressing key investment issues and reversing the country’s declining competitiveness and boost quality investment. Compliance with policy requirements of the 1997 Union Treaty with Russia calls for increasing alignment with Russian regulation and standards.

### **2.2. Cooperation policy of beneficiary country**

Basic lines and concepts of Belarus’ environmental policy have been determined by a range of legislative acts dealing with:

- improvement of nature protection legislation
- introduction of effective economic methods of management and control over use of natural resources and environmental protection
- setting up of an integral system for financing environmental protection measures
- improvement of the system of public institutions in charge of governing and environmental monitoring

- implementation of the environment training programmes and increasing of the public awareness on the environmental issues
- development of international cooperation in tackling environmental problems.

The National Sustainable Development Strategy that has been developed on the basis of recommendations and concepts set forth in the documents of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992). The country has established a system for long-term and short-term planning of environmental protection activities that relies on a National Action Plan for Rational Use of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection for 2001-2005, a National Strategy and an Action Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity. The environmental policy pursued by the Government provides for consistent structural reorganisation of the production sphere, improvement of production technologies, including resource-saving, application of low-waste and waste-free technologies, reduction of discharges and pollutants discharged into the air, waste utilisation and processing.

### **2.3. Sector Policy**

The country's ecological situation makes these policies look both urgently needed and still insufficient, triggering the need for targeted assistance. The air pollution problem is still critical for cities. Elevated pollution levels have been recently noted in industrial centres such as Mogilev, Gomel, Vitebsk, Bobruisk, Polotsk, Mozyr, and Grodno. Natural water pollution problem is no less critical. The majority of rivers in the republic relate to the "moderately polluted" category of the complex pollution index (CPI). Over the past few years, water pollution due to dirty discharge has been reduced; however, the degree of pollution is still very high on certain river lengths. This makes it crucial to reconstruct wastewater treatment facilities together with implementation of advanced technologies aimed to reduction or elimination of wastewater discharge.

Removal and disposal of waste, particularly toxic waste, is becoming an increasingly important issue. Although annual volumes have decreased, accumulated waste storage continues to increase, involving an increase in the area occupied by dumps and slurry tanks.

Other problems, although still topical, relate to the depletion of mineral resources. Among them are negative changes in natural complexes of large-scale amelioration areas, soil degradation and erosion, contamination of soil cover in urban areas and sites of large industrial enterprises, recultivation of disturbed soils, etc.

With regard to the integration of environmental concerns in policy-making, the Belarusian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection uses only elements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) methodology<sup>1</sup>, and in a piecemeal manner. The existing legal basis in Belarus does not meet the international standards in that respect, and is internally inconsistent. Institutional capacity is also weak and therefore SEA practice is fragmentary. There is also limited stakeholders' awareness about benefits of SEA. There are no national guidelines on SEA and the national experts' capacity is very weak.

Belarus has developed extensive international co-operation in the areas of environment protection and nature management. Continuous contacts have been maintained with intergovernmental

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<sup>1</sup> The SEA is an internationally recognised tool designed to reach better decision-making for integration of environmental and sustainability concerns in policy and planning processes. It is fundamental instrument to implement sustainable development.

organisations and agencies that have been established for implementation of international environmental conventions and protocols thereto. The priority is given to the development and strengthening of bilateral cooperation in environment protection with CIS Member States, other countries and potential investors (Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, etc.). Intergovernmental agreements with Russia, Ukraine, and Latvia as well as inter-departmental agreements with Poland, Denmark, Moldova, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Slovakia are being carried out.

### **3. DESCRIPTION**

#### **3.1. Objectives**

Under this project it is intended to finance various actions in the environment and sustainable development areas. At wide level, support is provided to the Belarusian authorities to strengthen capacity for effective implementation of strategic environmental assessment and to support implementation of the Rio Conventions in the country. At a local level, “Agenda 21” development initiatives will be promoted, together with citizens’ awareness raising and rural economic development through the creation of tourism-linked “green ways” and setting-up of “green schools” interested in monitoring and protecting their natural territory.

##### ***Overall objective***

The project aims at supporting environment and sustainable development at the central and local levels, through promotion of (a) institutional capacity, (b) local communities support and public awareness.

##### ***Specific objectives***

###### ***Component One***

The specific objectives of this component are:

- To build up institutional capacity in the sphere of SEA through transfer of international experience in practical application of SEA to national professionals acting in the field of environmental assessment.
- To improve the capacity of the Belarusian government to meet its international obligations under three important environmental conventions to which Belarus is party, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation, and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- To increase involvement of the local population in environmental activities as well as to improve national capacity in meeting the country’s requirements under the Aarhus Convention and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

###### ***Component Two***

The specific objectives of this component are:

- To develop the capacity and improve the legal basis for preparation and implementation of local sustainable development strategies, focusing on the regional level (“Agenda 21”).
- To enhance awareness about the importance of sustainable development, establishment of strong partnerships between stakeholders, creation of tools for public involvement in decision-making and enhanced transparency and accountability of local authorities in Belarus.

- To create awareness of environmental problems among young citizens (against a background of social apathy to such problems), through the establishment and development of the Green School concept.
- To create a Belarusian Greenways Network<sup>2</sup> while fostering dialogue and co-operation between civic, communal, business and governmental organisations.
- To contribute in improvement of public services and the local economy as well as to the preservation of the important nature, landscape and cultural values for present and future generations.

### **3.2. Expected results and main activities**

#### ***Expected results***

##### *Component One*

- Enhanced national sustainable capacity for SEA implementation and domestic mechanisms for sustaining and developing this capacity in the long term.
- Increased awareness of, and knowledge base built on, the needs and benefits of SEA and on the opportunities for the stakeholders to participate in the SEA process
- Information and Analytical Centre (including relevant databases, websites and monitoring system) established.
- Viable project ideas generated and potential donors, investors or other sources of funding identified capable of making a contribution to the implementation of the target UN Conventions.

##### *Component Two*

- Increased capacity of local authorities and civil society in the area of sustainable development focused on “Agenda 21”.
- Local legislation on “Agenda 21” developed and implemented in at least five municipalities and at least one legislative proposal at the central level.
- Improved awareness of local population (including young citizens) on sustainable use of renewable natural resources, on prohibited methods of economic management and behaviour, on the unique character of a number of protected areas and the imperative necessity of their conservation
- Increased activities of the local public communities for the sustainable development of the regions including tourism.
- Public awareness for protection of local heritage and environment increased.

#### ***Activities***

##### *Component One*

- Activities will consist in preparing and implementing SEA pilot cases that will result in the enhancement of environmental aspects and the environmental quality of specific policy decisions. During implementation of SEA pilot cases it is foreseen a few public hearings

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<sup>2</sup> Greenways are heritage trails leading along green corridors – rivers, historic trade routes, natural corridors managed together with local people to protect their ecological function, bring tourism and recreational activities and promote healthy lifestyle and non-motorised transport means.

and consultations, and delivering SEA Reports to the concerned authorities and citizens' groups.

The SEA pilot cases will include:

- Drawing up recommendations on legal basis upgrade with a view to create a coherent legal framework for SEA in Belarus
- Establishment of regulations and guidelines on SEA methodology and procedures in the Belarusian context, including guidelines on public participation in SEA processes
- An information and analytical centre will be established to support the coordination of all stakeholders (government institutions, NGOs, donors) to fully meet the requirements of the three global conventions. On the government side, the agencies to be involved are the ministries responsible for the implementation of the three conventions (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Energy), the State Committee for Energy Efficiency, the National Academy of Sciences, and the State Committee on Land Resources.
- Databases on the three UN Conventions to be developed and available
- Website(s) dedicated to the three UN Conventions to be set up
- The monitoring system to be established to follow progress in implementing the UN Conventions
- Printed and audiovisual materials to be produced to inform the public and decision-makers about progress in implementing the UN Conventions in Belarus.
- The permanent information exchange to be ensured with the information-analytical agencies of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, regional and local authorities for natural resources and environmental protection, local governments, statistics agencies, research and development organisations in Belarus and other countries, and contract specialists thereof for performing specific tasks within the Centre's competence.

### *Component Two*

- The project will organise awareness raising campaigns, training, development of indicators and educational materials for sustainable development. Development and dissemination of educational and methodological materials on "Agenda 21" (ca 5,000 copies)
- Information Centres will be created in three regions and act as hubs for "Agenda 21" activities. These centres will be complemented by a Mobile Information Centre, which will travel in the country to provide ad-hoc and practical consultations in its various regions. Special attention will be devoted to the exchange of knowledge and the building of long-lasting partnerships in the area of "Agenda 21" both in Belarus and with EU countries. A participatory, bottom-up approach will be followed, especially since the work on the local level is one of the few instruments available for development of democratic capacity in Belarus.
- The project will establish a Research and Educational Centre for children on the basis of the Lebiazhy Zakaznik (National Reserve). The centre will organise a regular ecological excursions for pupils. Schools will get an opportunity to observe the wildlife in close vicinity of Minsk city. The centre will provide practical training for pupils in the area of monitoring on the protected areas. Pupils will obtain skills of conducting field research, get knowledge on key species of flora and fauna, inhabiting and growing on specific territories in their regions, get acquainted with the problems of protection of these species. The centre

will be created with support of the Minsk City Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.

- The project will prepare and implement all necessary legal and organisational arrangements to the Belarus Greenways network, including the following priorities:
  - The “Ptich River Greenway” in Minsk region,
  - The “Blue Lakes Greenway” in Rossony region,
  - The “Varangians-to-Greeks Trail” Greenway from northern to south parts of Belarus,
  - The “Tsar Trail” Greenway in Belovezhskaya Pushcha region.

### **3.3. Stakeholders and institutional capacity**

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is the overall beneficiary. Within the Belarusian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection there is limited in-house capacity and professional expertise for integrative sector planning. Special planning tasks are either decided ad hoc or out-sourced to specialized companies or institutes.

The project will be implemented in cooperation with:

#### State/Governmental Entities:

Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Energy, the State Committee for Energy Efficiency, the National Academy of Sciences, and the State Committee on Land Resources, Minsk City Committee on Natural Resources, Local municipalities and communities.

#### International Organisations:

UNDP

Co-operation will also be sought with NGOs active in this area and civil society organisations.

### **3.4. Risks and assumptions**

#### The main risks are:

- lack of political support for economic reforms and elimination of administrative obstacles;
- lack of interest of the concerned government agencies to financially support those components of the project that will need post-project funding;
- the passivity of local communities and/or the lack of local leaders and/or frequent changes of representatives of local organisations.

These risks are to be mitigated both at the project preparation stage, when the necessary supports and commitments will be arranged, and during project implementation where project benefits will be largely demonstrated and disseminated to its governmental and non-governmental beneficiaries.

#### Assumptions:

Government support, be it organisational, financial or administrative, is felt necessary to ensure project success and subsequent sustainability. It is expected that the beneficiaries will actively contribute to the implementation of the project, appointing dedicated personal and providing required inputs to the work of consultants. The project will arrange and enhance dialogue and co-operation between citizens', communal, business and governmental organisations. These

organisations can provide support in various ways the efforts of local people to build and revitalise publicly beneficial trails and natural corridors.

The UNDP has previous experience of working in the field of sustainable development in Belarus and a basis for most of the activities of this project is already in place in the communities aimed at by this project proposal.

### **3.5. Crosscutting Issues**

The project will address a wide range of issues such as environment, training and education, SME and micro business development, local community development and social sector. Furthermore, during the project implementation gender equality and human rights will be addressed with particular attention.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

### **4.1. Implementation method**

Centralised Management by the EC Delegation, Kiev.

### **4.2. Budget and calendar**

€1,5 million over 24 months.

### **4.3. Procurement and award of grants procedures**

All contracts implementing the financing agreement must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

All programme estimates must respect the procedures and standard documents laid down by the Commission, in force at the time of the adoption of the programme estimates in question.

### **4.4. Performance monitoring**

Objectively verifiable indicators to be defined based on the expected results described in 3.3.

### **4.5. Evaluation and audit**

Project evaluation will be based on periodic assessment of progress on delivery of specified project results and towards achievement of project objectives. The projects' audit will be performed in accordance with standard procedures for grant/service contracts.

**Logframe in annex**

## 1. LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX – SUPPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BELARUS

Overall Objective	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
The project aims at supporting environment and sustainable development at the central and local levels, through promotion of (a) institutional capacity, (b) local communities support and public awareness.	The management efficiency of the central and local authorities improved and the public awareness in environment increased.	Official statistic and legislation; Media reports	Government support (including financial) is necessary to ensure project success and subsequent sustainability.  The UNDP has previous experience of working in the field of sustainable development in Belarus and a basis for most of the activities of this project is already in place in the communities aimed at by this project proposal.
Specific Objectives	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
<p><i>Component One</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build up institutional capacity in the sphere of SEA</li> <li>To improve the capacity of the Belarusian government to meet its international obligations under three environmental conventions.</li> <li>To increase involvement of the local population in environmental activities as well as to improve national capacity in meeting the country's requirements under the Aarhus Convention and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional capacity of the Belarusian government in its commitments to the international conventions improved (acting plan update, efficient management, etc)</li> <li>SEA integrated in the government environment assessment;</li> <li>Access for the public to relevant SEA activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Official statistic, legislation, reports, communications</li> <li>Statistics, reports;</li> </ul>	<p>The essential interest of the relevant government agencies to the financial support those components of the project that will need flowing-up funding;</p> <p>The local communities and the NGO's initiative will be encouraged and support by the regional authority</p>

<p><i>Component Two</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop the capacity and improve the legal basis for preparation and implementation of local sustainable development strategies, focusing on the regional level (“Agenda 21”).</li> <li>• To enhance awareness about the importance of sustainable development.</li> <li>• To create awareness of environmental problems among young.</li> <li>• To create a Belarusian Greenways Network.</li> <li>• To contribute in improvement of public services and the local economy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategy for sustainable local development drafted;</li> <li>- Local legislation update to the “Agenda 21 requirements;</li> <li>- Wide public involvement in “Agenda 21” achieved</li> <li>- Access for the pupils and teachers to the environmental educational programme</li> <li>- Greenways Network created;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategy, legislation, reports</li> <li>- Information facilities; Brochures, leaflets available, etc.;</li> <li>- Statistics, reports</li> </ul>	
<b>Results</b>	<b>Objectively Verifiable Indicators</b>	<b>Sources of Verification</b>	<b>Assumptions</b>
<p><i>Component One</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Enhanced national sustainable capacity for SEA implementation and domestic mechanisms for sustaining and developing this capacity in the long term.</li> <li>– Increased awareness of, and knowledge base built on, the needs and benefits of SEA and on the opportunities for the stakeholders to participate in the SEA process</li> <li>– Information and Analytical Centre (including relevant databases, websites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information and Analytical Centre established and fully operational;</li> <li>- Effective collaboration of the government institutions and the NGOs in UN Conventions implementation;</li> <li>- The quality of the information collected and free access of all stakeholders to the databases;</li> <li>- Databases and website on the three UN Conventions implementation established in Belarus;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Statutory documents;</li> <li>- Reports and surveys;</li> <li>- Database installed and accessible</li> <li>- SEA guidelines; Consultant’s report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The long-term commitment of the Belarusian Government to provide funding for the centre after project completion.</li> <li>- Sufficient governmental support for the SEA process</li> </ul>

<p>and monitoring system) established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Viable project ideas generated and potential donors, investors or other sources of funding identified capable of making a contribution to the implementation of the target UN Conventions.</li> </ul> <p><i>Component Two</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased capacity of local authorities and civil society in the area of sustainable development focused on “Agenda 21”.</li> <li>- Local legislation on “Agenda 21” developed and implemented in at least five municipalities and at least one legislative proposal at the central level.</li> <li>- Improved awareness of local population (including young citizens) on sustainable use of renewable natural resources, on prohibited methods of economic management and behaviour, on the unique character of a number of protected areas and the imperative necessity of their conservation</li> <li>- Increased activities of the local public communities for the sustainable development of the regions including tourism.</li> <li>- Public awareness for protection of local heritage and environment increased.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SEA guidelines developed, used and integrated into legal framework in Belarus;</li> <li>- Public participation in SEA process;</li> <li>- Enhanced national sustainable capacity for SEA implementation;</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Results of surveys;</li> <li>- Developed and operational at least three Information Centres for “Agenda 21” in different regions of Belarus including Mobile Information Centre;</li> <li>- Local legislation documents on “Agenda 21” drafted;</li> <li>- Publications of methodological and educational materials (at least 5000 copies).</li> <li>- Research and Educational Centre established and operational;</li> <li>- At least two school training programmes (including for teachers) developed;</li> <li>- Publications in the mass media and video production on the central and local TV channels</li> <li>- Green tourism development guidelines issued (at least four routs);</li> <li>- Recommendations for local heritage and environment in the regions developed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Surveys; draft legal documents;</li> <li>- Methodological materials;</li> <li>- Statutory documents;</li> <li>- School training programmes;</li> <li>- Articles in mass media;</li> <li>- Reports</li> <li>- Guidelines;</li> <li>- Consultant’s final report</li> </ul>	<p>Availability of the local initiative group inside local communities</p> <p>Support of the local authorities (including the City Department of Education) to co-finance the centre;</p> <p>Finance and promotion of Belarusian Greenways philosophy; Public awareness for preserving cultural and natural heritage;</p>
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