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Green Belarus News & Events in Belarus

BELARUS, EU PLAN TWO ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS WORTH €26 MILLION

Belarus and the EU plan to implement two environmental projects worth €26 million, Environment Program manager at the EU delegation to Belarus Philippe Bernhard said during the roundtable on the Paris climate agreement, BelTA has learned.

"Belarus and the EU have developed two large-scale programs. The first is to develop green economy, the second one, which is about to enter into force, to monitor air quality. The total volume of financing is €26 million," said Philippe Bernhard.

He stressed that these programs will make an important contribution to the fight against climate change. "We are now at a stage when we cannot effectively implement these programs only by the efforts of the EU and the Ministry of Natural Resources of Belarus. We count on the support of Belarusian ministries and organizations, and the UNDP. We hope that their experience and resources will help us achieve good results," he noted.

The roundtable on the Paris climate agreement is running in Minsk on 20-21 January as part of the fourth

meeting of the interagency working group on climate change, which includes representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and virtually all ministries and agencies of Belarus. The goal of the roundtable is to inform them about the new Paris agreement and its prospects.

The Paris Agreement is an agreement within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) governing carbon dioxide reduction measures from 2020. The agreement was negotiated during the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC in Paris and adopted by consensus on 12 December 2015. All countries are expected to adopt their own national targets to reduce emissions, to promote technological upgrade and adapt to the climate change. The national targets should be prepared by 2022. 2023 will see the first overall review of the state of affairs, which will happen every five years. The main goal of all national activities is to keep global temperature rise below 2C as compared to pre-industrial levels.

BELTA,
20.01.2016

THIS ISSUE:

- [Belarus, EU plan two environmental projects worth €26 million.....](#) 1
- [Belarus' protected areas urged to promote tourism.....](#) 1
- [Skiing season kicks off in Belovezhskaya Pushcha.....](#) 1
- [Malkina: Eco-friendly city project will be implemented either in Brest or Vitebsk.....](#) 2
- [Ban: Renewable energy is limitless.....](#) 2
- [After Xavier, Daniella doesn't seem so bad.....](#) 2
- [Great scientific interest.....](#) 3
- [Biological traces lead to truth after a thousand years.....](#) 3

BELARUS' PROTECTED AREAS URGED TO PROMOTE TOURISM

Belarus' protected areas need to tap into tourism business more actively to attract more tourists, Belarus' First Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Protection Iya Malkina said replying to a question from a BelTA correspondent.

"For quite some time Belarus has invested substantial budgetary resources in the development of protected areas. We can say that Brest Oblast is a leader here. It money is invested, there should be some impact. We need to look at the protected areas in the context of tourism opportunities. This is very promising. It will contribute to the development of infrastructure, attract foreign currency into the country," Iya Malkina noted.

There are eight reserves of the national importance in Brest Oblast. They operate 36 tourist and excursion routes and nature trails. In 2015 they hosted more than 7,000 visitors. The local environmental fund "Sanctuaries of Brest Oblast" raised \$700,000 in international assis-

tance last year. The funds were invested in ecotourism.

In addition, international grants are used for the technical needs of the protected areas. For example, as part of the EU/UNDP project Clima-East, which aims to address climate problems in Belarus, about Br7.8 billion has been allocated to clear wetlands in the Zvanets reserve. The environmental center in the Pribuzhskaya Polesie reserve is being renovated within the framework of another project "Supporting the transition of the Republic of Belarus to the green economy".

Iya Malkina is in Brest for the session of the Brest regional committee of natural resources and environmental protection. The First Deputy Minister considers the work of the agency in 2015 as satisfactory. She noted that in 2016 more efforts should be invested in cleaning up untidy land, attracting investment by environmental organizations.

BELTA,
21.01.2016

SKIING SEASON KICKS OFF IN BELOVEZHSKAYA PUSHCHA

This year's skiing season in the national park Belovezhskaya Pushcha has begun. The information is posted on the official website of the national park, BelTA has learned.

"The national park Belovezhskaya Pushcha continues developing ecotourism and education tourism programs. The new six-kilometer skiing route is an ecological path in the recreation zone of the southern part of the park. The track runs along an unsurfaced road with moderate upward and downward slopes through the forest of mainly pine, fir, and black alder trees. It also goes through a part of the high-water bed of the Pravaya Lesnaya River, marshes, and forest meadows," the post reads.

The route also features small artificial lakes created

in early 1970s to control the hydrological regime of the area. There is a specially arranged place for tourists to have a light meal and rest.



Belovezhskaya Pushcha is one of the largest forests on the European Plain that have survived in their primeval state. The park is divided by the state border into two parts, the Belarusian and the Polish ones. The Polish part is called Bialowiecki Park Narodowy. The Belarusian part of the forest together with the near-by territory is under the protection of the state nature protection agen-

BELTA,
19.01.2016

MALKINA: ECO-FRIENDLY CITY PROJECT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED EITHER IN BREST OR VITEBSK

A project of an environmentally-friendly city SymbioCity will be implemented either in Brest or in Vitebsk, Belarus' First Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Protection Iya Malkina told media, BELTA has learned.

"We see the potential of international projects. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is actively being explored them, together with UNDP, the European Union. Some positive steps have been made in this area, including in the development of Brest

Oblast. The SymbioCity project is very important for us. We selected two regional capital cities: Brest and Vitebsk. The application is now under consideration in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Depending on the priorities which are still to be outlined, this project will be implemented exactly in Brest Oblast," Iya Malkina said.

SymbioCity is a smart, eco-friendly city, comfortable for living. The concept of the project envisages the creation of parks, bike lanes,

parking, facilities for people with disabilities, mothers with baby carriages.

Iya Malkina attended the session of the Brest regional committee of natural resources and environmental protection. The First Deputy Minister considers the work of the agency in 2015 as satisfactory. She noted that in 2016 more efforts should be invested in cleaning up untidy land, attracting investment into municipal waste treatment.

BELTA,
21.01.2016

BAN: RENEWABLE ENERGY IS LIMITLESS

Everyone involved in energy - governments, the private sector, investors and financial institutions, cities, and people everywhere - has understood that we can no longer burn our way to global prosperity, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared at a debate hosted by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Financial Times, BELTA learnt from the UN News Center.

"We all know that renewable energy is limitless and will last forever," Mr. Ban said in the United Arab Emirates capital, Abu Dhabi.

"It offers us great security and peace of mind," he added. "Costs have come down so quickly that it is now often the cheapest option. And the more renewable energy facilities we build, the cheaper they will become."

The UN chief noted that since his last visit in 2012, enormous changes have occurred -

with the springing up of solar panels and wind turbines. He also highlighted the landmark agreements reach last year by the international community on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on climate change.

"Renewable energy is central to both," he stressed. "It will help provide solutions to the climate challenge, and to poverty, food security and many other challenges.

Clean, renewable energy will act as a catalyst and a force-multiplier for the SDGs. If we achieve it well before 2030, it will vastly improve our chances of achieving the other SDGs."

The Secretary-General urged leaders to maintain the momentum and redouble efforts on all their initiatives, insisting that access to clean energy is essential to leave no one behind in the move to zero carbon emissions.

"Events like this are vital to spread the word and spur other companies and institutions to examine their energy consumption and take part in the transition," he said. "One of the highlights in Paris [COP21] was the wave of announcements from the private sector, investors and financial institutions, cities and governments on their commitments to renewables."

Recalling that in 2011 he launched Sustainable Energy for All, as a global platform for all partners to come together across issues of energy access, renewables and energy efficiency, Mr. Ban underlined that thousands of actors from all sectors and regions of the world have stepped up to the challenge.

BELTA,
18.01.2016

[Global leaders gather to move Paris Agreement from negotiation to action](#)

AFTER XAVIER, DANIELLA DOESN'T SEEM SO BAD

The storm Daniella has recently raged across the country. The cyclone, which covered the country with snow, attacked Brest, covered Minsk in snowdrifts and departed towards Vitebsk. It cannot, of course, be compared with hurricane Xavier of March of 2013, being much shorter lived. Though Daniella caused a brief uproar, it did not take us by surprise.

Yesterday, 4,770 street cleaners appeared to shovel away the snow in Minsk. Some of them were even out at 4am! In the meantime, many caring drivers put their names on the list of those available to help to pull others out from snowdrifts and assist in delivering people to their destinations where they could get warm and be fed. At the peak of the snowfall, there were known to be more than one hundred people buried in the drift. On the whole, motorists displayed a praiseworthy level of solidarity.

State Traffic Police were also having to work hard under the increased pressure. According to the Department of Motor Vehicles and Traffic Control at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, during the storm the number of minor road traffic accidents virtually doubled. Though the traffic

flow was affected, there was no surge in the rate of serious collisions nor were the roads blocked for a long period of time.

Daniella did cause a considerable number of vehicles to skid on the roads however, and despite advance preparations, 350 snow-removal machines were required on the streets of Minsk to clear the aftermath of the snowstorm during the night shift, said Anatoly Zhamozdik, Gorremavtdor's Deputy Director General for Municipal

Improvements and Maintenance of the Minsk City Executive Committee. During the day, 500 units of special machinery were engaged in snow removal, and over 130 20-tonne trucks collected snow. 1,113 snow-removal machines had been utilised by midday, as well as manual snow removal by transport workers.

"After hurricane Xavier, several machines from the fleet were re-equipped with sand spreaders and snowploughs. Transport workers themselves removed snow from roundabouts, and park exits where the snow-removal machinery finds it hard to reach," said the Deputy Director General of Minsktrans, Victor Tozik. "We predicted a similar situation, and we directed more buses, trolley buses and trams to roads that were clear."

Daniella left hundreds of settlements without power and light. The main power cuts occurred in the Minsk, Mogilev and Gomel regions. Repair teams from the utility companies worked round-the-clock to repair the damage in order to restore the electrical supply as soon as possible. In the morning, residents of 207 settlements mostly in rural villages were still without power.

Experts have noted that, when severe weather conditions make access to damaged transmission lines difficult, the number of disconnected houses in the Mogilev and Minsk regions increased. "Long heavy periods of se-



vere weather (snowstorm, sleet, snow with rain), increases of wind with gusts up to 15-18m/s causes power cables to ice up. As a result, there is often damage and transmission lines are cut off," explained Alexander Malkov, Deputy Head of the Information Technologies Office in

Belenergo. Towards the evening, the problems were fixed in more than 500 settlements, with a small number of residents remaining affected.

The most unusual victim of the snowfall was the Dalmatian pelican that winters on the river Drut in the Kirovsk District of the Mogilev Region. Such environmental conditions are a novelty to this exotic bird, and the visitor from the south was rather uncomfortable. We contacted Alexander Vin-



chevsky, the Executive Director of APB BirdLife Belarus public association. He told us that, "Sometimes birds confuse their routes and fly to the wrong place. The Dalmatian pelican was also seen in Poland where it wintered until January 8th. Generally, European white pelicans visit us more often, while it is the first time in over a hundred years that the Dalmatian variety has been seen in our country."

The Minsk Times,
20.01.2016

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It is a digest of the most important news and events.

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GREAT SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Belarusian-American scientific ties to strengthen, following first joint seminar on sci-tech co-operation, hosted by National Academy of Sciences.

For the third time in recent months, representatives of American scientific circles have visited our country, pursuing special goals: to outline areas of joint work; to establish mechanisms of co-operation; and to create personal ties between scientists.

In 2013, Belarus and the USA ran eight joint projects. In 2014, there were only five, but all with greater scope. The Chairman of the National Academy of Sciences' Presidium, Vladimir Gusakov, notes that mutual interest is being demonstrated in laser physics, material studies, waste processing, bio-technologies, chemical synthesis and development of pharmacological products.

In April, Belarus was visited by the Senior

Vice President of the US National Association of College and University Business Officers, Matthew Hamill, who was impressed with the level of our laser technologies (his area of professional interest). This time, the American delegation featured specialists in agriculture and medical IT: areas promising for collaboration. The foreign guests visited the National Academy of Sciences' exhibition, to see the most significant works by our scientists in the field of machine building, space and laser technologies, and new materials. The Americans were keen to view innovations at the Microbiology Institute: bio-drugs for industrial cattle breeding which are a good alternative to antibiotics and hormones.

Guests also admired work at the Republican Scientific and Medical Centre for Cell Technology (part of the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering).

BELTA,
13.01.2016

BIOLOGICAL TRACES LEAD TO TRUTH AFTER A THOUSAND YEARS

The Vavilov Institute of General Genetics of the Russian Academy of Sciences is developing a new project within the DNA Identification Union State programme. Criminalists of the Union State are eager to see the results of the five-year project, which is worth 3bn Russian Roubles.

Svetlana Borinskaya, a Doctor of Biological Sciences and a chief research worker at the Institute's Laboratory of Genome Analysis, tells us more:

Ms. Borinskaya, in recent times, 'research' appears to have repudiated the genetic relationship between our three Slavonic nations of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. According to these studies, Belarusians are related to Poles and Russians are Finno-Ugrians. What is your scientific opinion?

Science is convinced that the Belarusian, Ukrainian and Russian nations are genetically extremely close. Anthropologists and geneticists have conducted many studies, coming to similar conclusions. However, you're right: information on this issue is being distorted — either for political reasons or some other. We're surprised. Only an incompetent person could say that Russians are Finno-Ugrians (a linguistic classification rather than genetic). Molecular-genetic methods used to reconstruct our demographic history are similar to linguistic, but geneticists study DNA rather than languages.

How would you describe this Union State programme?

The project we're working on envisages a fundamental scientific task: characterising the Belarusian and Russian genofond. Genetic research on the population began in the 1950-1960s in the Soviet Union. We can now analyse DNA as a routine laboratory procedure. Our institute has a collection of biological samples, representing each population of Russia and its neighbouring countries. Using these, we can investigate genofonds of local regions. The results of this analysis obviously find lots of applications in practice, such as assembling databases for use in investigating crimes, terrorist acts and catastrophes.

We know about identifying criminals by fingerprints. How does DNA profiling help?

If a criminal fails to leave fingerprints, what can we do? We need to search for biological traces: saliva, blood or sweat. We can identify anyone by their individual DNA; we only need a couple of cells — for example, of sweat, left on a handset. Moreover, DNA's individual character-

istics are preserved for centuries; with this in mind, the method is named DNA-dactylography. DNA analysis of substances can help detect whether a certain person has conducted a crime.

What is the state of the DNA database currently available to criminalists?

There are two types of database; DNA-profiles overseen by criminalists, used for criminals' DNA-profiles (to track personality trends among repeat offenders); and population databases, which characterise the DNA of people residing in certain geographical areas. These help detect the region of a person's origin — even if only a DNA sample is available.

So far, only scientists who've developed the method can use these databases, which are not yet full, failing to provide complete and detailed information on settlements. We need to work on this, to ensure that all regions are represented and that law enforcement bodies can independently use them. This is the key task of our Union State programme.

We understand what's missing and which Belarusian and Russian regions need to be studied. Moreover, the system under development will allow us to distinguish eternal features by DNA determination. In the coming five years, we plan to move to new DNA-identification technologies, meeting the global level of genome analysis. Probably, in this field, Russian and Belarusian technologies will lead.

EXPERT OPINION

Vadim Stepanov, Doctor of Biological Sciences and the Deputy Director of the Scientific-Research Institute of Medical Genetics (responsible for scientific work):

Studies of various ethnic groups have demonstrated that genetic characteristics reflect place of birth and residence, as well as ethnicity. Forensic medicine and criminalistics provide practical applications and we are developing new approaches to diagnostics using the data. If we can identify genetic markers for hereditary diseases, specific to certain population groups, we can take targeted preventative measures. New methods enable us to research the genofond of our modern generation by 'extracting' the DNA of our forefathers, comparing this with modern samples. We can determine which nations founded or followed a certain ancient culture. We can recreate a 'map' of movement across our planet through the centuries.

The Minsk Times,
13.01.2016

[100th time along the route of new discoveries of Belarusian corners](#)

[Belarus to be "country in focus" at IAEA meeting on nuclear power infrastructure in Vienna](#)

