



Public review of the implementation
of Sustainable Development Goal 13

TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS



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Introduction

In 2015, the UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 subordinate targets.

The Republic of Belarus is active in implementing the 2030 Agenda at the state level, in particular, by establishing an institutional structure, capacity building, developing and tracking national SDG indicators, reporting, and other measures. In 2020, taking into account the 2030 Agenda, the Government of the Republic of Belarus adopted an updated National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2035.

SDG 13 «Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts» includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to climate change, climate change education and awareness, and supporting developing countries in implementing SDG 13.

1. Basic information on greenhouse gas emissions and targets to reduce GHG emissions in the Republic of Belarus

From 2000 to 2020, Belarus demonstrated a trend towards a gradual increase in greenhouse gas emissions. In 2020, GHG emissions reached 88.8 million tons of CO₂eq., which is 7.4 million more than in 2000.¹

Total greenhouse gas emissions (million tons of CO₂ equivalent)

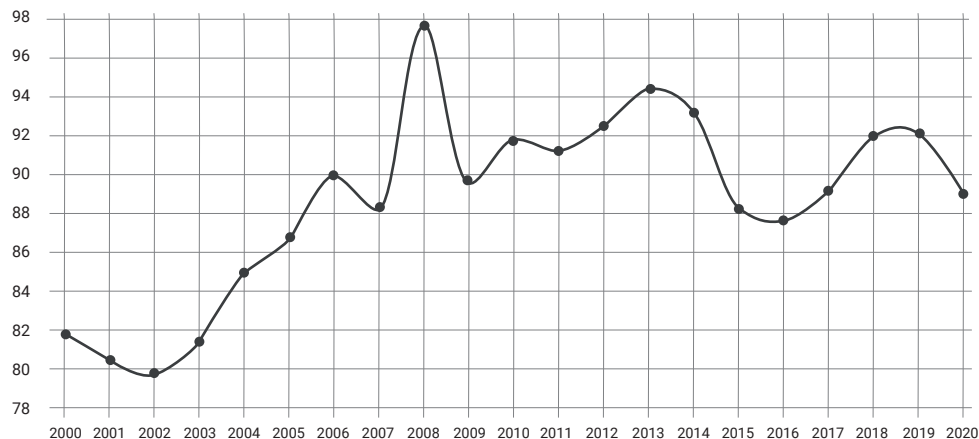


Figure 1. Greenhouse gas emissions in Belarus in 2000-2021, million tons of CO₂ equivalent

Most greenhouse gases are emitted in the following sectors of the economy² (share of national emissions):

62,0% ENERGY
including any fuel combustion

24,5% AGRICULTURE

6,9% WASTE

6,7% INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES
AND PRODUCT USE

The Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector has negative net emissions, which are provided by carbon storage mainly as a result of biomass growth.

Belarus, with a population of about 9.5 million people (2019), accounts for a relatively small share of global greenhouse gas emissions – **0,18%**³. Per capita CO₂-equivalent emissions in Belarus were 6.46 tons in 2019, and despite significant fluctuations in recent years, this figure demonstrates an upward trend.

Although Belarus is a country with medium emission levels and achieved a considerable reduction in the economy's carbon intensity over 1995-2020, its goals of reducing emissions by at least 35% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels⁴, including the LULUCF sector, are not ambitious. If Belarus receives international assistance for climate action, the country expects to achieve a 40% reduction in CO₂ emissions.

For comparing greenhouse gas emissions and GHG reduction commitments with other countries, please refer to Figure 2 and Table 1 below.

Figure 2:
CO₂ emissions per capita
(Land use change not included) by country⁵.

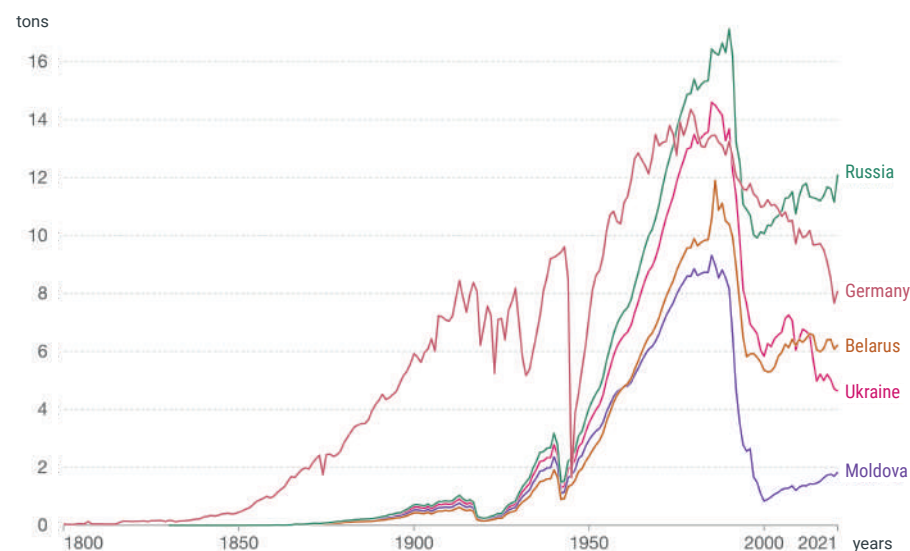


Table 1:
Emissions per capita in 2019
and plans to reduce CO₂
emissions by country⁵.

Country	CO ₂ emissions per capita, 2019 (ton) ⁵	Plans to reduce CO ₂ emissions by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels)
Belarus	6,46	35% (40%)
Moldova	1,28	70%
Ukraine	5,06	65%
Germany	8,52	40%
Russia	11,51	25-30%



2. Implementation of SDG 13 in the Republic of Belarus: state of affairs and main challenges

Framework conditions for SDG 13 implementation in Belarus

Work on SDG 13 at the national level was carried out mainly within the framework of international treaties to which Belarus is a party – the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁶, the Kyoto Protocol⁷ (2005), and the Paris Agreement⁸ to the UNFCCC (2016). Since 2017, Belarus has approved and implemented the Action Plan to Implement the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC⁹.

Belarus has established a process management architecture for achieving the SDGs at the national and regional levels and has not provided for a particular structure responsible for SDG 13. The intersectoral environmental group's work covered climate change issues within the framework of the Council on Sustainable Development. These issues were also a focus of the activities of two coordinators on ecology who were part of the Sustainable Development Partnership Group.

Belarus has established three government interdepartmental working groups:



In addition to government efforts, local city and district administrations in Belarus actively were combating climate change in 2016-2020 as part of the voluntary Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy Initiative (30% emissions reduction by 2030 compared to the chosen post-2015 baseline year), as they had the support of both budgetary and international funding.



Inter-agency cooperation and capacity-building activities for civil servants on SDG 13 were conducted mainly as part of international cooperation projects. Horizontal integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation issues into the regulation and strategic planning of various economic sectors of Belarus was relatively slow, especially after international

cooperation wended down.

By 2020, the capacity of NGOs working on climate change has reached a maximum level compared to previous periods of the country's development. Work with national and local NGOs to achieve SDG 13 was done at the national and local levels, led to cross-sectoral partnerships and built a high level of trust between state and non-state actors. Achieving SDG 13 has become a high priority for many NGOs.

The events of 2020-2022 significantly decreased the relevance of the climate agenda and the potential for SDG 13 activities within Belarus. After 2020, the participation of civil society in work on the achievement of the SDGs decreased significantly, as many NGOs were liquidated. However, many examples of successful cooperation between government agencies and NGOs on SDG 13 in Belarus exist.

The system of national indicators for achieving SDG 13 in Belarus

The Republic of Belarus has developed a system of national SDG 13 indicators, which correlate with the international set of SDG 13 indicators.

However, national indicators for SDG 13 do not practically reflect the impact of climate change on the most climate-dependent and vulnerable sectors of the economy (agriculture and forestry, healthcare, access to water resources, energy, and transport), as well as the economic losses of these sectors associated with climate change.

The main focus of adaptation-related indicators is the consequences of emergencies (disasters) and disaster (critical event) risk reduction. No attention is paid to adaptation to so-called slow (or chronic) climate change.

The national SDG 13 indicators do not include an assessment of the increased vulnerability of certain population groups to climate risks.

The most climate dependent and vulnerable sectors of the economy of the Republic of Belarus :



agriculture and forestry



healthcare



access to water resources



energy



transport

Achieving SDG 13 in the Republic of Belarus



Target 13.1 «Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries».

Indicators of achieving Target 13.1 include data on the number of people killed, injured, sick, temporarily displaced, and evacuated due to emergencies. For most years of 2010-2021 (excluding 2010 and 2013), the value of indicators is zero¹⁰. It isn't easy to assess the achievement of the target by the indicators used. Given that the methodology for calculating the indicators only considers major emergencies, the zero value is most likely due to the absence of significant emergencies in these years rather than a high degree of resilience and ability to adapt to climate hazards and natural disasters.

Indicators for Target 13.1 also include the availability of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which have been fully achieved in Belarus.



Target 13.2 «Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning»

The Republic of Belarus actively incorporated mitigation and adaptation to climate change into sectoral development, both at the national and local levels. Belarus adopted sector-specific adaptation strategies (forestry, agriculture), strategies for water resource

management in the context of climate change until 2030, strategies for conservation and sustainable (rational) use of peatlands, the National Action Plan for Green Economy until 2025, and implements sectoral state programs 2021-2025 to achieve SDG 13. Belarus plans to adopt a Strategy of Long-Term Development of the Republic of Belarus with Low Greenhouse Gas Emissions for the Period up to 2050.

The total annual greenhouse gas emissions from 2000 to 2020 were gradually increasing from 81.4 tons of CO₂ eq in 2000 to 88.8 million in 2020¹⁰.



Target 13.3 «Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning»

A number of international projects involving governmental and non-governmental organizations has addressed the inclusion of climate education in both secondary and tertiary curricula. However, official data on the achievement of the indicator has not been published, in particular, due to the lack of a methodology for calculating the indicator at the global level. Given that the main driver of climate education and awareness has been public organizations and international initiatives, their absence in the current context will lead to decreased activity in this area.

Addressing the impact of climate change on vulnerable population groups

The review of international sources shows that people with low income, the elderly, people with chronic diseases and people with disabilities, young people (especially children), and women are most vulnerable to climate change. The vulnerability of these groups is due to limited resources for timely adaptation, health status, sensitivity to weather changes, exposure to risks associated with extreme climatic events, mobility (access to transport services), and awareness about climate change in relation to their private life.

According to the survey of experts' opinion conducted in May-July 2022, the elderly, the rural population, and people with chronic diseases are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change in the Republic of Belarus. All these groups are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to their low mobility, low income, and ability to adapt to climate change.

In Belarus, the problem of the vulnerability of specific population groups to climate change has not yet received adequate attention.

The most vulnerable categories of the population to the consequences climate change according to international sources:



The most vulnerable groups of the population to the consequences of climate change in the Republic of Belarus:





3. Recommendations for improving climate change mitigation and adaptation policies

3.1 Recommendations for government agencies

STRENGTHEN INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION IN ACHIEVING SDG 13

To improve inter-agency communication on climate change adaptation, maintain the effectiveness of the established cooperation mechanisms (cross-sectoral working groups) and encourage scientific and technical cooperation and information exchange. Organize adequate communication to, inter alia, strengthen a common understanding of vulnerability, policies and specific activities on adaptation to climate change. Ensure the involvement of different stakeholders, including representatives of NGOs, the most vulnerable groups, and the largest GHG emitters.

MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE ISSUES INTO SECTORAL PLANNING

It is necessary to provide mainstreaming of climate issues into sectoral development strategies and plans. This requires developing, adopting, and implementing adaptation strategies in climate-sensitive sectors such as construction, transport, energy, water supply and sanitation, waste management, etc.

SUPPORT RESEARCH

Research on the damage and impact of climate change on economic sectors is required to integrate climate risk into planning and decision-making and to develop evidence-based climate policy.

MONITORING AND DATA COLLECTION

To establish an effective system for monitoring the achievement of SDG 13 targets, improve the national indicators for SDG 13, namely:

➔ Consider the impact of climate change on the most weather-dependent and vulnerable sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, health, access to water, energy, and transport;

➔ Consider adaptation to the so-called slow (or chronic) climate change (e.g., increase in mean annual temperature, change in precipitation patterns, a shift of ecosystems from south to north, etc.), which also significantly impacts the environment and socio-economic development of Belarus;

➔ Consider economic losses associated with climate. It is advisable to conduct a detailed study to determine the extent of damage in agriculture and forestry in Belarus, as they are the most climate-dependent sectors of the economy, and to introduce a system

of continuous collection of statistics by indicators, which will allow the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forestry and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection to quickly monitor the situation and direct the development of the sectors on the optimal scenario;

➔ Consider climate risk management in the healthcare sector and analyze excess morbidity and mortality due to the effects of climate change.

RAISING AWARENESS AND COMPETENCIES

It is recommended to have a communication strategy to share and disseminate information on climate change. Well-organized communication will effectively identify barriers and stimulate mitigation and adaptation activities in various sectors of the economy. Include climate change issues in education, advanced training, and re-training programs for specialists in different sectors. Special courses should be organized for ministries and agencies and the top management of enterprises. Study visits and meetings of Belarusian specialists with experts from different countries will help to study the best practices of adaptation measures.

INVOLVEMENT OF BUSINESS

To strengthen the participation of the private sector in achieving SDG 13:

➔ Develop climate change adaptation guides for businesses in different sectors of the economy;

➔ Organize dissemination of the best practices of adaptation and

share lessons learned through the development of cluster cooperation in economic sectors;

➔ Establish interaction and inform stakeholders on potential climate change impacts in the various sectors of the economy;

➔ Establish interaction with small and medium-sized private enterprises to collect information on needs and experiences in adaptation to climate change.

MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE ISSUES INTO CURRICULA

Efforts should be directed toward achieving Target 13.3 «Improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning» by focusing on the indicator of achieving this target. This includes integrating climate issues into curricula, appropriate teacher training, and student assessment. Incorporating climate education in both secondary and tertiary curricula requires a detailed evaluation and an action plan, which should be developed to meet Target 13.3.

DEVELOPMENT OF FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION ACTIVITIES

Establish a National Climate Fund to finance GHG emission reductions and increase GHG absorption, reduce vulnerability, and improve the resilience of human and ecological systems to the negative impacts of climate change. Proceeds from GHG emission tax can finance the Climate Fund. The introduction of such a tax is expedient for the Republic of Belarus and the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union, given the upcoming border carbon tax payable when

exporting goods to the European Union.

Implement climate risk insurance to have sources to cover damages in the event of climate risks for residents and businesses.

INCORPORATING CLIMATE CHANGE INTO SOCIAL POLICY

The social sector should develop policies to provide social aid to vulnerable populations affected by climate change. Such measures may include operational assistance, such as various programs and tax-free payments, housing subsidies, medical care and assistance to people who have been injured or lost their jobs due to the emergency.

Creating opportunities for NGOs to participate in decision-making processes and increasing confidence in SDGs at the national level

NGOs represent the interests and needs of various population groups. Therefore, cooperation of the state with NGOs will help to consider the population's interests as much as possible in shaping the state policy. Opportunities to realize the potential of NGOs are enhanced when funding is available. Therefore, expanded funding for SDG 13 activities, including those of NGOs, will encourage them to play a more active role in combating climate change and adapting to its consequences.

3.2 Recommendations for civil society organizations to achieve SDG 13

The following are suggestions for NGOs to increase their expertise and gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of climate change in the conditions close to the first half of 2020:

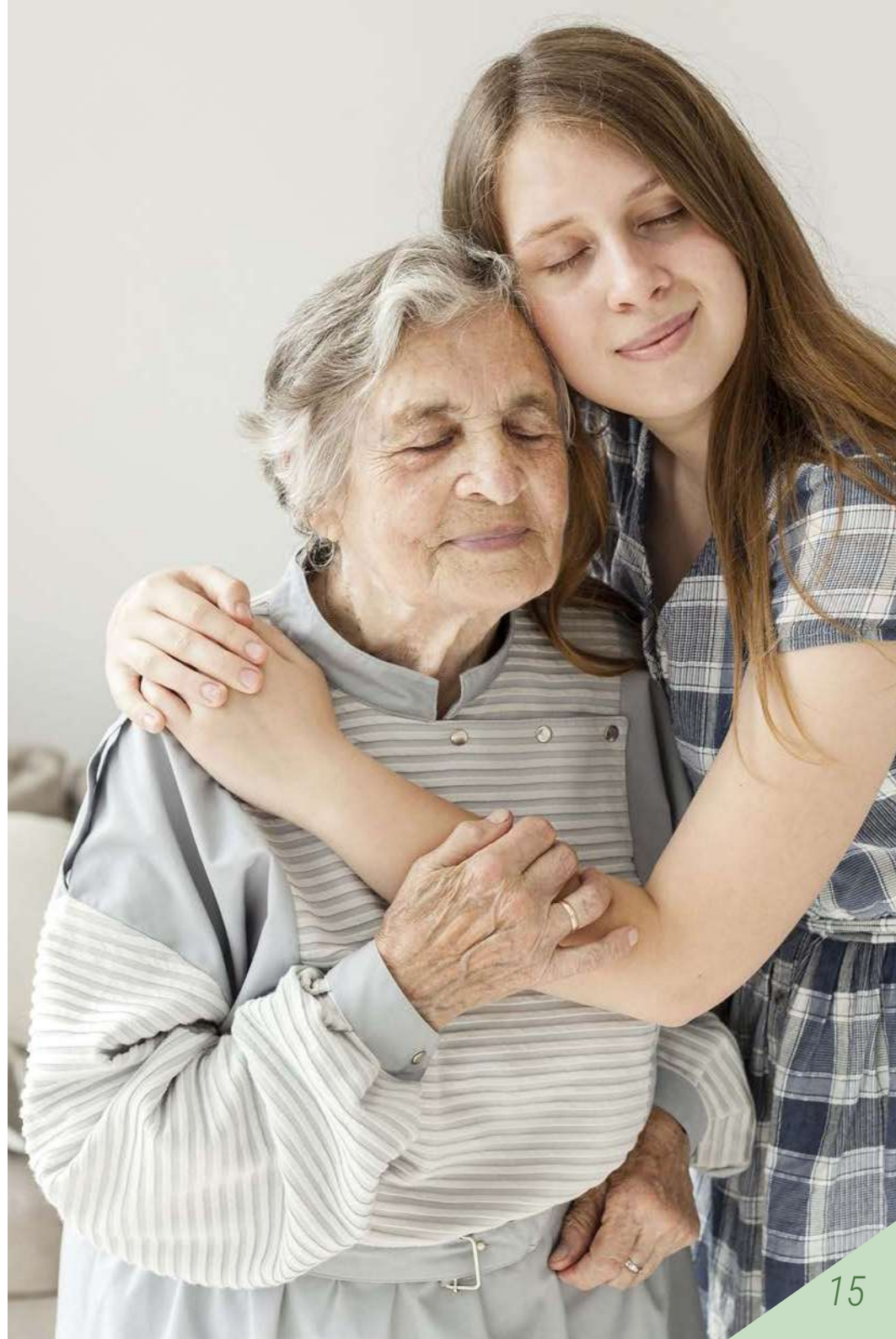
- ➔ participation of Belarusian NGOs in international processes, negotiations, networks, and coalitions;
- ➔ raising awareness of local NGOs about SDG 13 and involvement of new NGOs in the process;
- ➔ establishment of national NGO coalitions focused on SDG 13;
- ➔ developing partnerships between NGOs and the private sector to increase private sector participation in achieving SDG 13;
- ➔ developing cross-sectoral cooperation to achieve SDG 13, which integrates environmental, social, and economic development issues.

3.3 Recommendations to improve the adaptive capacity of vulnerable groups

Adaptation programs and measures must take into account the vulnerability of specific population categories to the effects of climate change. At the same time, the term vulnerable groups is currently missing in the legislation of Belarus, so there is no common understanding of who belongs to these groups. Therefore, there is a need for a more detailed analysis of climate impacts on population groups with a breakdown by gender, age, income, health, and other factors (with the involvement of representatives of these population groups in data collection).

Adaptation measures to support vulnerable groups must include:

- ➔ Information on climate change, education on how to behave during dangerous weather events, and early warning;
- ➔ Increasing the resilience of local infrastructure to both extreme and slow onset climate change;
- ➔ Development of insurance against risks in case of fire, illness, injury, crop failure, etc., as well as government support programs for vulnerable population groups.



List of sources and literature

¹ <http://sdgplatform.belstat.gov.by/sites/belstatfront/index-info.html?indicator=13.2.2>

² Draft Strategy for the Long-Term Development of the Republic of Belarus with Low Greenhouse Gas Emissions for the Period up to 2050

³ <https://eu4climate.eu/belarus/>

⁴ In 1990, greenhouse gas emissions reached 137,766.4 thousand tons of CO₂eq (excluding LULUCF) and 117,201.4 thousand tons of CO₂eq (including LULUCF).

⁵ <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/co-emissions-per-capita?tab=chart&country=DEU~BLR~UKR~RUS~MDA>

⁶ Decree of the President of Republic of Belarus of April 10, 2000, No. 177 «On Approval of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change»

⁷ Decree of the President of Republic of Belarus of August 12, 2005, No. 370 «On Accession of the Republic of Belarus to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change»

⁸ Decree of the President of Republic of Belarus of September 20, 2016, No. 345 «On Adopting the International Treaty»

⁹ Plan of Measures to Implement the Paris Agreement to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

¹⁰ https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/SDG/Naz_perechen_pokas_SDG/tsel-13/

