

2015



GREEN
NETWORK
BELARUS
2015
ANNUAL
REPORT



> 800

cited by > 800 media

44

GN members

> 300

volunteers

50.000

readers of the GP monthly

9

start-ups of School of Young
Environmental Leaders alumni

10.000

public actions participants



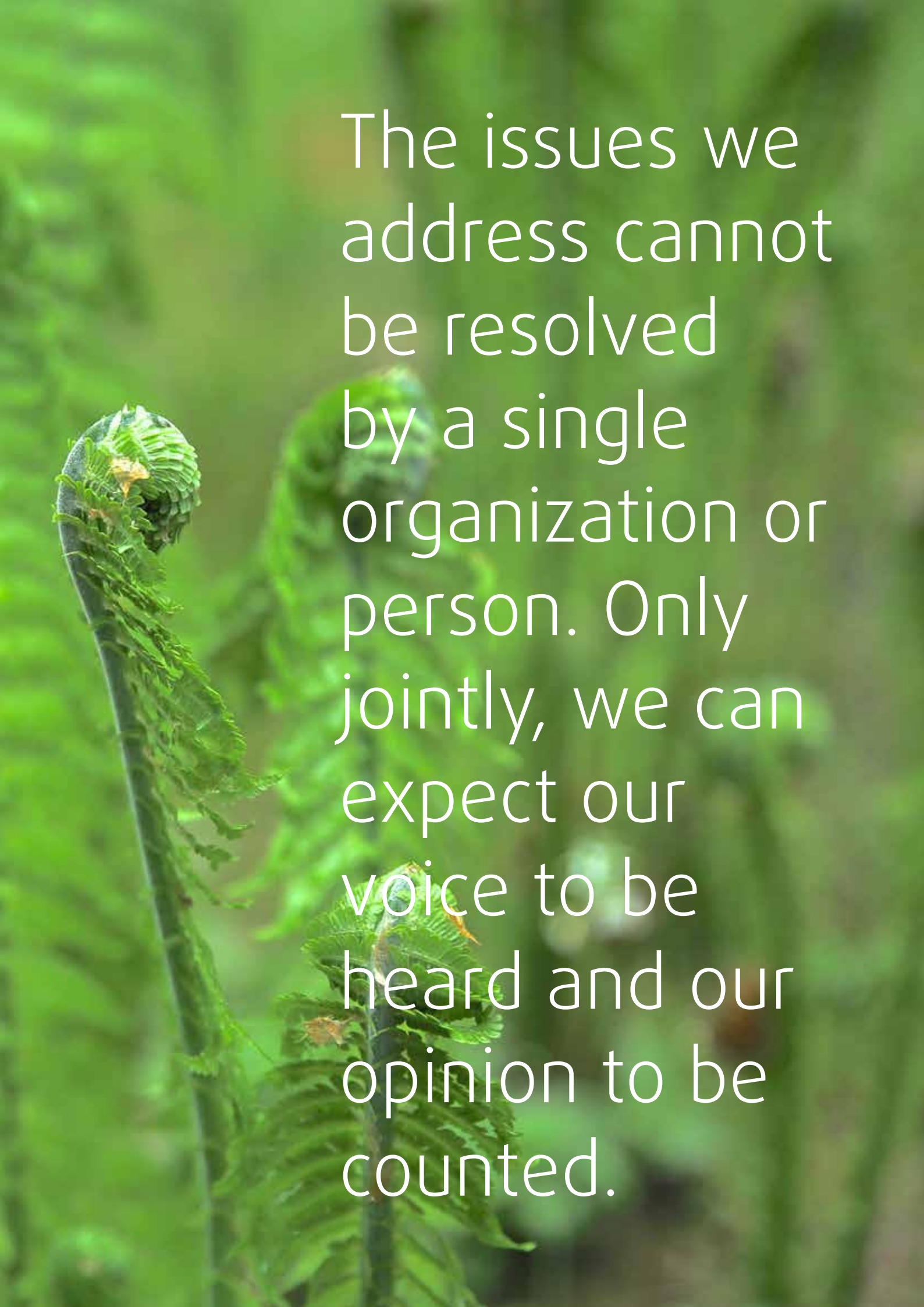
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The issues we address cannot be resolved by a single organization or person. Only jointly, we can expect our voice to be heard and our opinion to be counted.

INTRODUCTION

Dear friends
and colleagues



We are glad to offer you an overview of accomplishments of Green Network (GN) in 2015, in other words, our annual report. We had only 30 pages to tell you about the outcomes of this year's work. But we hope that after reading this report you will have a better understanding of the reasons why Belarusian nature and development of environmental initiatives are so important for us, and why we put so much time and effort into it.

From this report you will also learn how to join specific activities of GN and organizations that are part of it, as GN is a space where those striving for positive change in their yards, towns, regions and in the whole country can find ideas for joint work, as well as like-minded people.

We will be happy if reading this report will provoke suggestions for cooperation or constructive criticism, for which we will be grateful, too.

MEET GREEN NETWORK

Green Network is a community of environmental organizations, activists, initiatives, and experts that united into a network to address environmental issues that cannot be resolved by effort of a single actor.

The history of the Belarusian public green movement remembers us as a simple partnership from November 6, 2007. At the moment the partnership comprises 12 public associations and 32 individual participants (see the Annex). GN organizations and activists work in Minsk, Grodno, Gomel, Baranovichy, Brest, and other towns and cities of Belarus.

The issues we address cannot be resolved by a single organization or person. Only jointly, we can expect our voice to be heard and our opinion to be counted. This is the main reason behind our drive for consolidation of the Belarusian green movement.

Green Network's mission is to achieve harmony between human and nature through sustainable development and a strong green movement.

GN's strategic areas of activity are:

1. Nature protection and recovery of ecosystems;
2. Promotion of public participation in environmental decision-making;
3. Development of public green movement in Belarus and EECCA region (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia).

We want people in Belarus and the region to understand the value of nature and treat it with care and respect. We want them to have knowledge, skills and efficient mechanisms for participation in environmental decision-making. This should improve state environmental management; economic development should not damage the environment; the right to a healthy environment should be guaranteed, and nature should be preserved for us and future generations of people.

Activity of the partnership is based on **principles** of sustainable development and the Earth Charter, as well as fairness, transparency, democratic participation, human rights and gender equality.

During eight years in existence, Green Network has become a true instrument for mutual assistance, expert support and cooperation for those Belarusians, who are concerned with environmental protection, improving the quality of life, and care for the future of their children and grandchildren.

We actively cooperate with public administration bodies, the academic community that share our concern about conservation of Belarusian nature, as well as a number of other civil society organizations and business companies.

International cooperation is also one of key priority areas of our activity. Green Network is an active participant of the [Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum](#), GN's representative is a co-coordinator of Working Group #3 of the Forum (Environment, climate change and energy security), and of the international [Climate Action Network](#) for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

GN BOARD MEMBERS



Konstantin Chikalov,
deputy director of Public Association "Bahna"



Igor Kutalovskiy,
landscape designer, member of the Public
Association "Ecohome"



Inna Orekh,
executive director of the Public Association
"Ecohome"



Nataliya Porechina,
project coordinator of the Center of
Environmental Solutions



John Roseman,
member of the management board, Public
Association "Minsk Cycling Community", director
of the "Foundation for Ecological Transport"



Victor Yermolenkov,
sustainable development expert,
Cand. Sc. In Biology



Vladimir Zuyev,
chairman of Environmental and Heritage Public
Association "Nerush"

Nature protection and recovery of ecosystems:

- Urban Forester
- Climatic Campaign
- Belarus Wildlife Protection WG
- Let's Protect the Pripyats Oak Forests

Promotion of public participation in environmental decision-making:

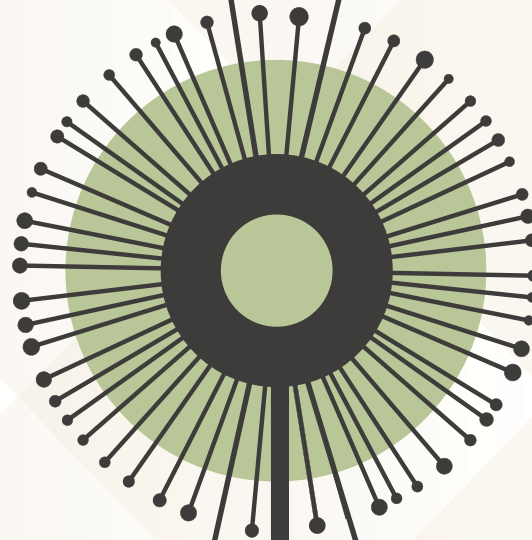
- Green Watch Movement <
- > 100 legal consultations to citizens <

Development of active green movement:

- 44 GN members
- Support to 11 regional initiatives
- 9 start-ups of School of Young Environmental Leaders alumni
- > 300 volunteers
- 50.000 readers of the Green Portal monthly
- Cited by > 800 media
- Approx. 10.000 public actions participants

Our values:

- Sustainable development <
- Earth Charter <
- Fairness <
- Transparency <
- Democratic participation <
- Respect for human rights <
- Gender equality <



GREEN NETWORK IN 2015



OUR ACTIVITY

A photograph of a wooden boardwalk made of dark, weathered planks, stretching straight into the distance through a vast field of tall, golden-brown grasses. The sky is a pale, clear blue, and the overall scene is bathed in the warm, soft light of late afternoon or early morning. The boardwalk is the central focus, leading the viewer's eye from the bottom center towards the horizon.

CAMPAIGNS

URBAN FORESTER

Urban Forester is a campaign of the Green Network partnership aimed at preserving green areas in cities by efforts of citizens.



A NEW GENERAL CONSTRUCTION PLAN OF MINSK

The Urban Forester campaign was actively involved in the analysis of the draft General Construction Plan of Minsk and public environmental review of the document. Public environmental review is one of the tools of public participation in environmental decision-making.

In the comments that were developed activists and campaigners identified a number of important issues: the need for construction in landscaped and recreational facilities of an infrastructure for cycling and walking, the need for implementation of a program for enhancement of the of water and green diameter and Slepjanskaya water system, creation of an annex document with a complete list of "sites for greening" and more. Developed comments are under consideration and will be included in the approved text of the General Construction Plan.

12 KM OF MINSK'S MOST BEAUTIFUL AND ANCIENT TREES

Most citizens of Minsk have no idea how old this or that tree in Minsk is. Meanwhile, there are those that survived the second and first world wars, and even the war with Napoleon. Urban Forester volunteered to correct this omission and held a tour called "100-year-old trees in Minsk."

During the tour, Minsk dwellers walked through many significant places: the Gorky Park, where there are trees older than 200 years, the Meneskova Mountain with a 130-year-old maple tree, and the Alexander Square, home to the most beautiful tree in Minsk.

"Each of us came up to trees during the tour and whispered something softly, smiling and holding tightly against the trunk. I could not resist it either. In intricate intertwining trunks of these beautiful trees, one can leave all sorrows and give rest to eyes tired of the gray city walls. Thank you very much to the Urban Forester for this walk!" (**Inga**, a participant of the walking tour).

Especially for those willing to follow the Urban Forester on a walking tour around Minsk, the first ever book-guide "Minsk City walking marathon" appeared on the Internet. Download this beautiful map and embark on an exciting journey through the city.

"HELLO, BIRDIE!" OR 30 NEW BIRD HOUSES

One Saturday afternoon the Urban Forester invited kids and grown-ups to the Drozdy park for a celebration of the Birds' Day. Of course, kids were the main activists and campaigners that day. Those who attended the event got professional instructions for making a birdhouse from the Forester's guru. During a walking tour around the park, participants of the event heard stories about local birds from Denis Kitel, an ornithologist, and could see many of them with their own eyes!

During the year, the campaign's activists held around 50 consultations for citizens, who faced issues with tree cuts in their yards and residential areas.

Contact us:
urbanforester.by; ikorzunster@gmail.com



CLIMATIC CAMPAIGN

A dramatic sunset or sunrise over a landscape. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the center, surrounded by a halo of light. The sky is filled with layers of golden and orange clouds, some appearing as long, horizontal streaks. The horizon line is visible at the bottom, showing silhouettes of trees and a dark ground.

Goals of the Climatic Campaign include support to mitigation of impact on climate and adaptation to existing and future change thereof.

CLIMATIC CONFERENCE IN PARIS

The 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) became the most notorious event in the past 5 years for the whole environmental community and for the world in general. In this conference, the parties were finally able to complete the long process of developing a new global climate agreement, which in 2020 will replace the Kyoto Protocol, and involve all countries of the world in a common cause - the fight against climate change and adaptation to its effects.

Thanks to support of the Green Network partnership, for the first time the civil society was so well represented in the official delegation of the Republic of Belarus at the negotiations. The delegation consisted of **Anastasia Bekish** (Green Network partnership), **Maria Faloleyeva** (IPO "Ecoproject") and **Elena Laevskaya** (NGO "Ecopravo"). Experience of interaction with government agencies within COP21 was the first example of such a broad and long-term cooperation in the field of climate change. The participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations allowed to efficiently contribute to the formation of the Belarusian position to negotiate seriously and strengthen the working relationship with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection for further work on the development of the country's climate policy.



Climate Campaign's activity includes informing, raising awareness and involvement in climate-related areas of ordinary people through exciting social events. Notable examples of the annual climate-related activities of Green Network include the **"Earth Hour"** and **"Climate, don't go!"**.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Green Network continued its work on co-coordinating the international climate network of public organizations **Climate Action Network (CAN)** in the region of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The network brings together 30 organizations and national networks in the region and focuses on the coordination of activities in the field of climate policy development and enhancing the capacity of member organizations.

A long-term strategy of network development and the annual plan of organizational development were designed in 2015. For professional improvement of network members and other interested campaigners and green activists, climate campaign held 12 webinars on the topics covering climate science, negotiation, information work for NGOs, project management and fundraising. Besides Green Network's experts, experts of the EU "ClimaEast" project, WWF Russia, Greenpeace Russia, 350.org, were invited to deliver presentations in webinars, as well as well-known journalists. Records of webinars can be found on the CAN EECCA Youtube.account.



In November 2015 a representative of the Green Network, Anastasia Bekish, was elected co-coordinator of the **Working Group #3 "Environment, climate change and energy security" of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership** and joined the **Steering Committee of the Forum**. In 2016 representatives of the Green Network aim to preserve and strengthen the environmental agenda in the framework of the National Platform and the Forum.

Contact us:
nasta.haliak@gmail.com; [Climate Action Network](#) in Facebook

“In the recent past, the climate expert community haughtily referred to analysis and reviews from colleagues from NGOs, but now the former carefully listen to forecasts of the latter. And one can cite many examples when the latter took over the former. For example, it gives me great pleasure to read through the analytical reviews and articles covering climate change emanating from the pen of Green Network’s experts, and, in my opinion, many of their proposals can now be implemented and taken into account in national policies”, —
Alexander Grebenkov, Project Manager of the UNDP-GEF project “Improving energy efficiency of residential buildings in the Republic of Belarus”.

A photograph of a forest with moss-covered tree trunks and fallen brown leaves. The text is overlaid on the image.

BELARUS WILDLIFE PROTECTION WORKING GROUP

Belarus Wildlife Protection Working Group (BWP WG) is a group of enthusiasts that united for the purpose of effective conservation of protected areas (nature reserves, national parks, nature reserves and natural monuments).

BWP WG was created and is maintained by the Green Network partnership; the WG's activity is coordinated by a civil society organization "Bahna", members of the group are experts and representatives of organizations such as APB BirdLife Belarus and PA Ecohome.

The WG's **goals** are: creation of new and expansion of existing SPNAs (Specially Protected Natural Areas); enhancing wildlife protection in SPNAs; promotion of best practices for nature conservation; improving the legal and regulatory framework; direct protection and sustainable management.

Monitoring of National Parks and Reserves

Throughout the year, WG members conducted monitoring of national parks and reserves (NPs "Pripyat", "Naroch", "Belovezhskaya Pushcha", "Bрасlav Lakes", "Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve"). An important part of the monitoring is analysis of national parks' management plans, which are a kind of a strategic plan for development of the parks, and on which its sustainability depends in the short-term prospective.

Following the analysis of territories and expert assessment, as well as participation in the discussion of management plans, WG members developed recommendations and proposals for management and sustainable development of all Belarus' national parks and the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve.

Sustainable Forest Management = FSC

Throughout 2015 the WG's activists and campaigners participated in the monitoring of FSC certification of all national parks and one forest reserve in Belarus.

International certification is one of the few real opportunities for the public to monitor forest management and to make their comments to improve it. Through FSC forest certification, any organization and any citizen of Belarus may affect the fate of the forest areas of the country.

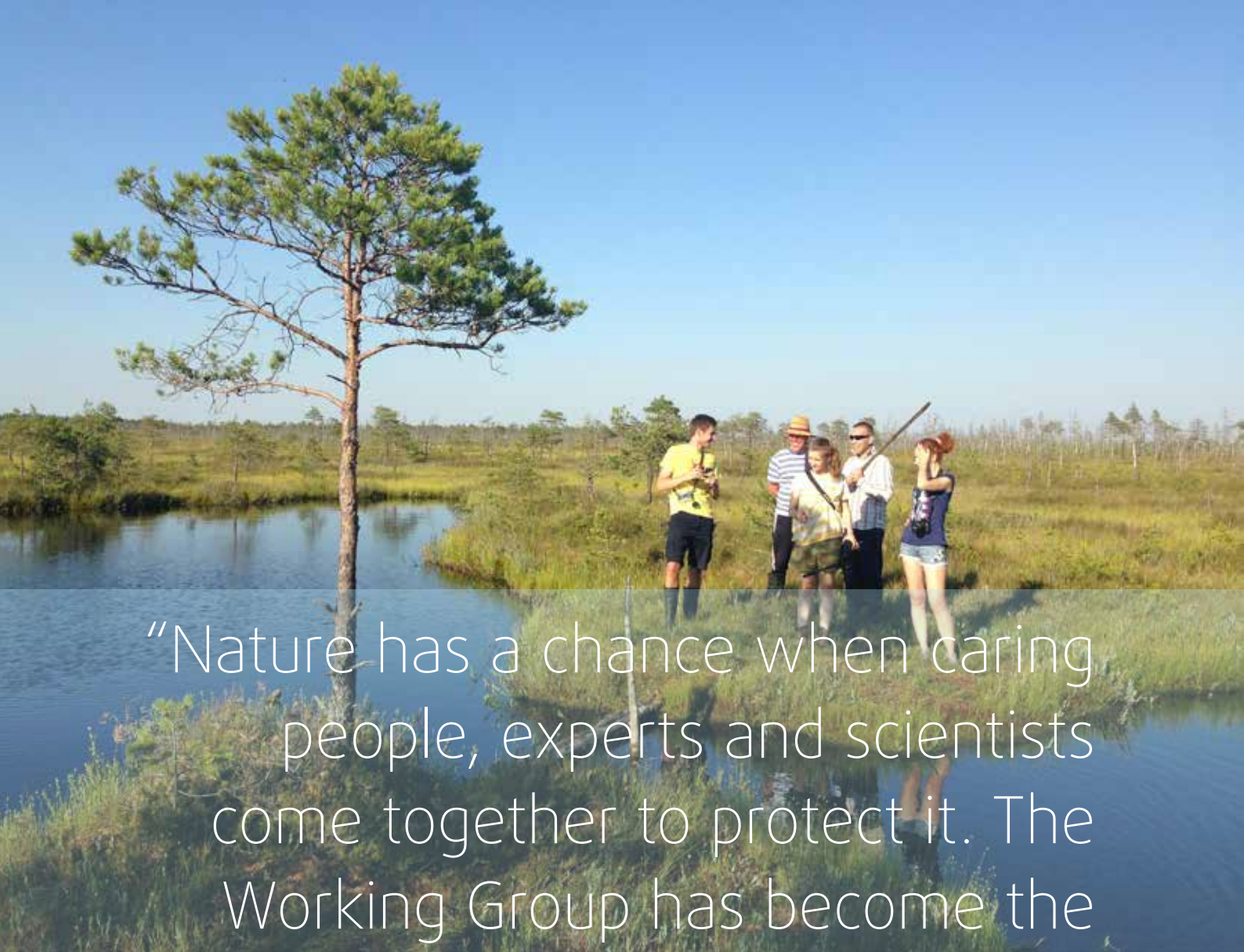
The auditors, who annually within a few days check selected areas for compliance with the criteria, guarantee compliance with certificates. To get a real picture the auditors need public assistance and participation.

It is worth noting that this year, the public – represented by the WG and the CSO "Bahna" - participated in the FSC audit in Belarus for the first time. Furthermore, active participation in the audit enabled the WG team to meet with the management of national parks and establish close collaboration with them.

The Forestry Code

Adoption of the draft of the new Forest Code, which, according to environmentalists' assessment, can destroy the most valuable part of the forest fund of Belarus, became really bad news in 2015. Thanks to the work of the WG, the news received wide response among public organizations, environmental experts, and in the Belarusian society. In addition, Greenpeace and WWF experts joined the process of analysis of the new project, and the assessment they voiced was negative. Esquire named this topic among one of the most popular petitions Belarus, published in 2015.

Unfortunately, the draft Code was adopted without public input, but the WG team intends to continue work on its improvement.



“Nature has a chance when caring people, experts and scientists come together to protect it. The Working Group has become the very community where we can all contribute to the preservation of national parks, nature reserves, forests and wetlands of our country”, – Dmitri Grummo, Institute of Experimental Botany of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

Belarus Wildlife Protection Working Group in 2015:

- Analysis of national parks' management plans;
- 7 copyright materials on nature protection topics in cooperating with the Green Portal;
- 459 complaints and 27,630 signatures collected on Change.org and Zvarot.by platforms against the new version of the Forestry Code;
- 10 public consultations on nature protection issues in SPNAs;
- Comments to the new National Strategy for Conservation of Wetlands and Sustainable Use of Peat Deposits;



- Participation in the creation of the Emerald Network in Belarus (network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest);
- Creating a movie about Belarusian wetlands for the Climate Conference COP21 in Paris;
- Analysis of SPNA's problems, collecting information, identifying systemic problem factors, formulation of requests and offers;
- Publications: "On national park management features of Belarus" in the conference proceedings in the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve and analytical materials on the Forestry Code in the WWF periodical "Sustainable forest management";
- Thematic screenings.

Contact us:

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A woman with grey hair, wearing a blue and black hoodie, stands in a lush green forest. She is holding a laptop computer. The background is filled with trees and dense foliage. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

“LET’S PROTECT THE PRIPYAT OAK FORESTS” CAMPAIGN

Pripyat Polesie is a unique natural area in the heart of which there is the National Park “Pripyat”. However, economic activity has been booming here in recent years: centuries-old oak forest is cut down; hunting for birds and animals is held almost all year round.

The campaign works on:

- expansion of the protected area of the National Park “Pripyat” and returning the groves and other rare forest habitats their protected status;
- providing public access to information on the activities of the National Park “Pripyat”;
- amendments to the legislation of the Republic of Belarus on SPNAs in order to improve it.



In 2015, the campaign actively participated in FSC certification of the National Park “Pripyat” in order to improve the situation with the wildlife protection, as well as to monitor the extent to which products and services produced by the National Park are consistent with the principles of environmentally responsible forest management.

During the certification process, representatives of the campaign opposed the fact that the current zoning of the National Park does not fully ensure the preservation of unique ecosystems.

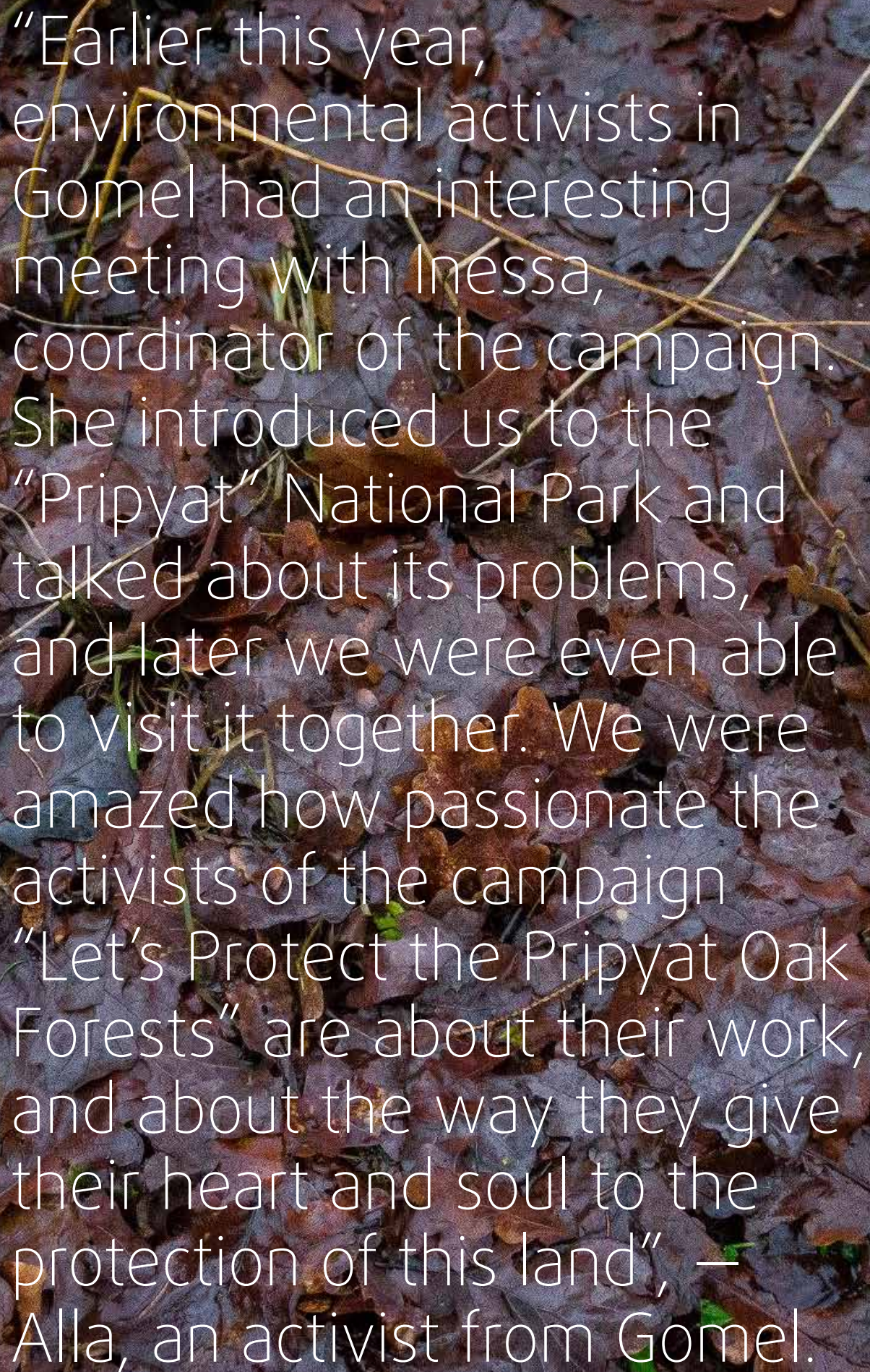
As a result, to obtain the FSC certificate the National Park “Pripyat” needs to eliminate more than 40 comments, which becomes an incentive to improve its work.

To enable inclusion of oak forests in the protected area of the National Park, activists and campaigners initiated a discussion of changes in zoning of the National Park with the participation of public representatives and academic experts. Now the National Park zoning discussion continues in the framework of a working group at the Department of Presidential Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

To spread the news, the campaign operates a website, as well as groups in social networks (Fb, Vk), where all the news about the situation in the National Park are discussed and published.

The following year, the campaign will continue active work on preparation and adoption of instruments that help to improve the situation with the wildlife conservation in the National Park “Pripyat”.

Contact us:
saveprypjatski.by; zelpa@gmail.com



“Earlier this year, environmental activists in Gomel had an interesting meeting with Inessa, coordinator of the campaign. She introduced us to the “Pripyat” National Park and talked about its problems, and later we were even able to visit it together. We were amazed how passionate the activists of the campaign “Let’s Protect the Pripyat Oak Forests” are about their work, and about the way they give their heart and soul to the protection of this land”, — Alla, an activist from Gomel.

PUBLIC ACTIONS

Calendar of public actions by Green Network and our partners:

March 28

the Earth Hour;

May 16

“Zrobim!”, a global clean-up campaign;

April 22

the Earth Day;

June 6

“Climate, don’t go!”;

September 16-22

Mobility Week, Car Free Day;

October 22

World Paper Free Day;

November 15-22

Plastic Free Week.



Outreach actions of city and national scale are an opportunity to present environmental issues, such as climate change, conservation of wetlands, green consumption, etc., to ordinary people in a clear, vivid and inspiring manner.

It is noteworthy that each of the organizations - members of the partnership brings its ideas to holding public actions and involves active volunteers of its region, thereby turning such actions into true city events!

Earth Hour 2015:

- ▶ The event was held in Minsk, Brest, Grodno, Baranovichi, Gomel;
- ▶ Lights went out in buildings in the Nezavisimosti and Pobeditelei Avenues, at the National Library, the shopping center "Stolitsa", the church of Saint Simon and Helen, towers opposite the railway station, some of Minsk universities;
- ▶ The event was supported by the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the Ministry of Energy and other government agencies;
- ▶ Dozens of companies, institutions and thousands of Belarusians switched off the lights in their homes and offices;
- ▶ 100.000 kW / h of energy saved;
- ▶ Cafes that took part in the campaign in Minsk: "Ź Bar", "London", "Chainaya Komnata" (Tea Room), "Chainoye Sostoyanie" (State of Tea), "Cherdak ("Attic"), "The Mists", "Wake up coffee";
- ▶ Concerts by candlelight of such bands as "Navi" and "Hummuskiss" in Minsk, "Shuma Voices" in Gomel.

“Zrobim!” Clean-Up Campaign

The main feature of the “Zrobim!” campaign is that these are voluntary initiatives that have no single focal point. This means that almost each and every one can organize a clean-up by inviting friends or colleagues, and you can always join those who have already organized a rubbish collection point in your city.

On May 16, volunteers, activists and campaigners of the green movement, schools, community initiatives and organizations, commercial companies - all together in one day came to clean up rubbish in the cities, forests, around rivers and lakes.

The activists and campaigners of the Urban Forester campaign with volunteers also joined and held a large-scale clean-up in a poplar grove. As a result of joined work two garbage trucks were filled to top. During the garbage sorting and removal operation no living being was affected, including among the 20 participating volunteers.

Outcomes of the 2015 “Zrobim!”:

1433
participants;

60
clean-ups;

24
cities in Belarus;

112305
kg of rubbish collected.

The “Zrobim!” campaign in Belarus is part of the global campaign **Let’s Do It – World Clean-up 2015**, which unites millions of people in an attempt to free nature from rubbish and ensure sustainable cleanness in the whole world.

In Belarus the “Zrobim!” campaign is initiated by the Center of Environmental Solutions, Green Network, PA “Ecopartnership”, APB BirdLife Belarus, PA “Minsk Cycling Community”, PAB “VeloGrodno” etc., as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus.

“The difference before and after the rubbish was removed was enormous! Such a contrast ... The Earth seemed to be choking with dirt. I hope that those who took part in the clean-up will never dare to throw anything past the rubbish bin again”, —
Katya, a participant of the campaign.

“Climate, don’t go!”

As part of the annual environmental action “Climate, don’t go!”, in the run-up to the Conference of Parties to the UN Climate Convention in Paris, Green Network invited all interested persons to an urban environmental plenair. Each attendant could choose an art material: paint, brushes, crayons, or charcoal. The main purpose of the action in 2015 was to enable participants to reflect on how much we will lose, if we do not stop climate change. Thus “The most precious thing that should remain on the planet” became a theme for creativity. Clean sea, pandas, own city, whales, parents – the off-the-moment exhibition featured more and more new plots.

The action took place in collaboration with the art studio “Wostray”, which helped everyone to express their ideas and artistic designs on paper. In addition to drawing, one could exchange waste paper for planted spicy herbs, as well as send a climate postcard by mail.



Plant a pine forest? Done!

In the spring under the National Forest Week activists and campaigners responded to the Urban Forester calling on them to go to the Uzda forestry (Minsk region), to plant a forest.

The location was chosen quickly, as workers of the Valerianovskoye Forestry of the Minsk region responded to the activists’ strong desire to come together to plant trees and gladly provided planting material, held a detailed briefing and shared all the necessary knowledge. They told how forest grows, when to plant it, how to monitor and take into account each tree, and what it is actually worth.

As a result, the beautiful phrase “planted forest” is worth a specific number of 3,000 new pine trees on a plot of 1.6 hectares.



“I park as a...”

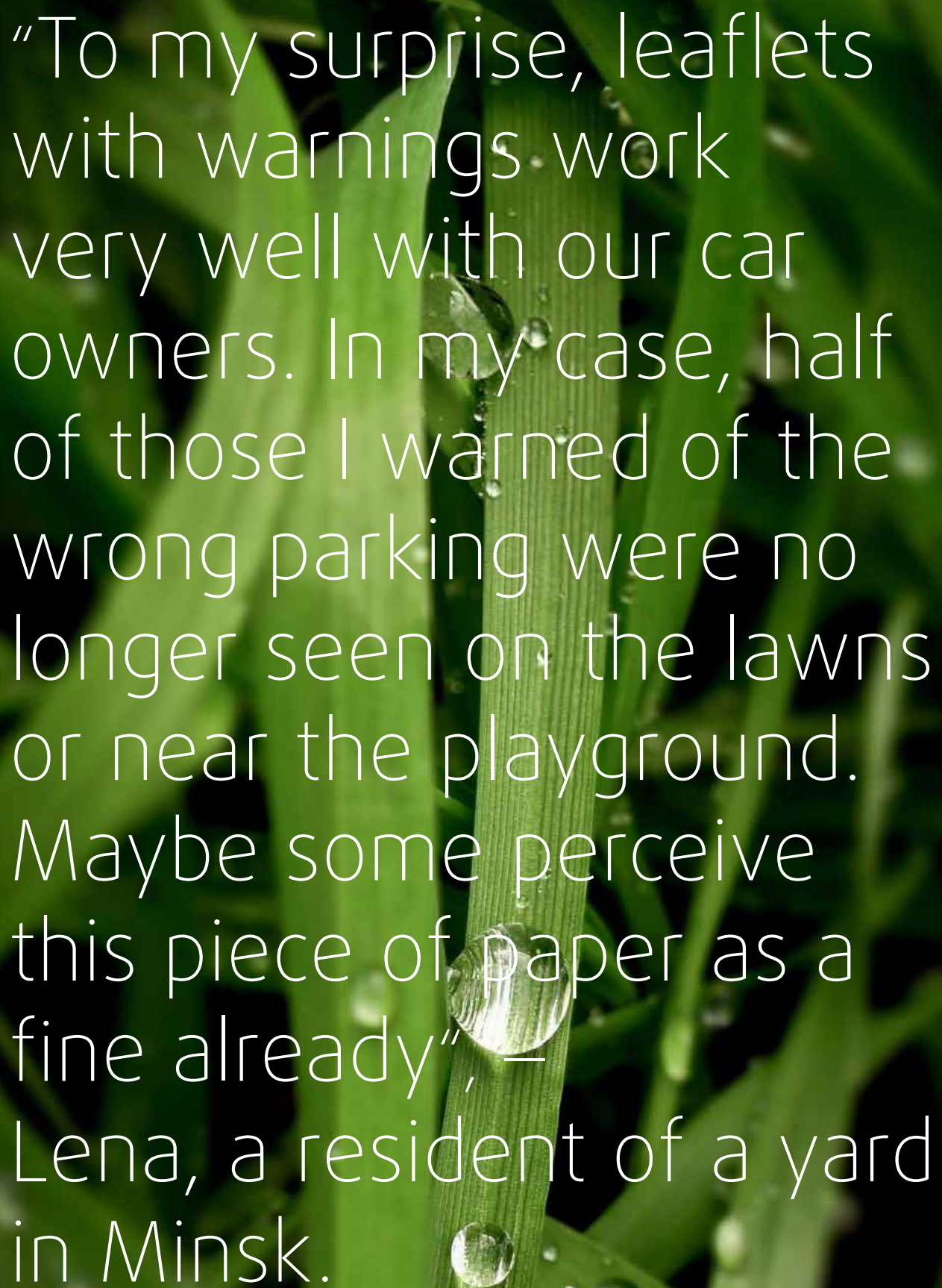
Probably each of us has seen some car owners leave their cars in the green zone and harm the environment by destroying vegetation. Such parking also creates additional problems for the passage of special vehicles of rescue services and ambulances.

The idea to organize an action to work with parking in the green zones in the yards came to members of the Green Network and Green Watch. Together with **Minsk City Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, the traffic police of the Traffic Directorate of Minsk City Executive Committee, SE “Garages, parking lots and parking”, “Belarusian Association of Experts and Transport Surveyors”** the final image of the campaign was formed – “I park as a ...”.

Based on complaints received from local residents, activists and campaigners chose “problem” yards in Minsk. Car owners, who parked in green areas, were informed about violation by a specially developed information leaflet. With the help of these leaflets one can also learn about free parking spaces next to residential buildings. If the owner of the car did not change “parking habits”, representatives of the traffic police fined negligent drivers during a raid the following day.

Next year, participants and campaigners plan to raise awareness of local residents and invite them to cooperate; campaigners also plan to negotiate with urbanists, who are interested in working with the issue of yard planning, in a more systematic manner.

Contacts:
pressgreenbel@gmail.com



“To my surprise, leaflets with warnings work very well with our car owners. In my case, half of those I warned of the wrong parking were no longer seen on the lawns or near the playground. Maybe some perceive this piece of paper as a fine already”, — Lena, a resident of a yard in Minsk.

THE GREEN WATCH

“The Green Watch provided us with the necessary materials to work efficiently in the field of public control over the environment. They helped us with the legal justification of our activity, with expert advice from professional ecologists and lawyers. Now we want to take the entire Pripyat under public control”, — Sergei, director of the “For a clean Pripyat”, — foundation, Polissye.

The Green Watch

is a public environmental inspection, created in order to help the people of Belarus to solve everyday environmental problems through prevention, detection and correction of non-compliance with environmental legislation.

Goals of the Green Watch:

- addressing specific environmental problems;
- prevention, detection and correction of violations of environmental legislation;
- collection of data on the most frequently recurring violations for further analysis;
- development of proposals to amend the existing legislation or enforcement practice;
- to attract the attention of responsible government bodies to specific violations of environmental legislation.

The Green Watch in 2015 :

130

watchmen, who watch over the implementation of environmental laws

790

appeals to the state bodies

774

consultations provided

574

environmental problems identified; over 60% of the identified problems already resolved

100

inspectors trained

530

subscribers in social networks

The Green Watch Handbook of Algorithms is the core tool for resolving environmental issues

The legal team of the Green Network partnership “translated” the tricky language of laws into clear algorithms and compiled the **Green Watch Handbook**. It features 45 clear step-by-step instructions for those willing to resolve environmental issues on their own.

The Green Watch together with lawyers from Green Network constantly monitors changes in environmental legislation to make timely amendments to the developed Handbook. Thus, the Watch has developed new algorithms that will be included in the new edition of the Handbook: *how to organize battery collection in your office, what to do if you are concerned with odor, what to do if fallen leaves are taken away in the wrong place, if different types of waste are collected into one car, if the territory of a residential area is treated with chemicals without warning.*

There is a very simple algorithm to reduce the number of arising environmental problems: do not break the law. However, many citizens, businesses and even government authorities violate them because they merely do not know about their existence. Thus, one of the strategies of the Green Watch is prevention of infringements by informing people. A user-friendly leaflet copes with this task perfectly well. Therefore, the Green Watch team has developed **5 types of leaflets** to prevent most typical violations in the countryside and in the forests: how to fire properly and safely, how to pick berries and mushrooms, wild plants, stew burns, as well as how to prepare juices.



Green Watch regional branches

Development of regional teams of public inspectors who “take control” of certain territories is becoming a priority for the Green Watch. They organize expeditions (and even raids) and identify environmental issues, which are then resolved. Therefore, residents of the regions obtain necessary knowledge and handy tools to independently manage environmental issues in the territory of their towns or residential areas. To date, **14 regional teams operate in 4 oblasts of Belarus.**

One of the success stories of a regional group is an example of activists from Brest region, who by themselves with the help of the Handbook of Algorithms resolved the issue of improper storage of waste from a farm and called the management of the company to account.



Tours around... dumps:

On average, each of us produces 657 kg of waste annually. What happens to the waste after it gets into the rubbish bin? To answer this question, in spring the Green Watch invited everyone on an unusual tour to the “Trostenets” landfill of municipal waste. The tour caused a real stir among those wishing to get to the dump, but only 40 people were accommodated, including journalists. As a result, the guided tour was covered in more than 30 publications in the media and provoked extensive subsequent discussion of the problem of waste in Belarus.

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“Green Watch” on Facebook

LEGAL SERVICE

“Specialists of the Green Network constantly advised and assisted us in preparation for the public consultations, but most importantly, together we were able to stop the expansion of new hazardous industries, which threatened to turn the woodworking enterprise in Smorgon into a chemical one, above all! Finally, our voice was heard!”, —

Sergei, a local resident, Smorgon.

Lawyers of the legal service are working to help citizens protect their environmental rights and to promote appropriate participation in environmental decision-making.



During the year, the legal service of the Green Network:

- Held more than 100 consultations for citizens who asked for help in solving local environmental problems;
- Participated in 7 court cases to protect the right of citizens to a healthy environment: (Construction of pig farms in Molodechno, illegal construction of two houses in Vasnetsova-Plekhanov (3 cases) streets, construction of the pig farm in Vaukavysk region, the refusal of the Soviet district administration to provide the EIA report on the construction of the hotel in Krasnaya street, refusal to hold public consultations on the case of construction of a church on the lake Bolduk);
- Participated in the discussion of the EIA report (environmental impact assessment) and developed comments and suggestions for improvement thereof for more than 10 production facilities;
- Developed comments to the Forestry Code, the Code on Subsoils, Law on the State Environmental Expertise, Law on Amendments to Public Participation Procedure;
- Prepared a review of the practice of implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Belarus in 2015;
- Participated in the working groups, as well as the meetings of the Compliance Committee of the Aarhus Convention in Geneva, in one of which was a complaint of harassment against environmental anti-nuclear activists was adopted;
- Lawyers of the Green Network, as members of the Commission on Development of Waterway E-40 Connection on the plot Dnieper-Wisla, working in group #3 "Transboundary water resources and the environment", took part in the approval of the most gentle to the environment project for development of the waterway.

In order to find out what problems exist with regard to access to justice, the right of everyone to a healthy environment, how competent judges are in matters related to environmental legislation and ready to improve their knowledge of these questions, and to provide insight into how we should act in the future, the Legal Service of the Green Network released an overview of judicial practices in environmental cases for 2010-2014 in Belarus.



Assistance to Belarusians in defending the right to a healthy environment:

- With the assistance of lawyers of the Green Network active locals defended from cutting a chestnut park near the railway station in Polotsk;
- After consulting a local resident of the Antonishki village attained design changes and the transfer of new power lines 50 meters further away from his village;
- Environmentally hazardous MSW landfill project in Lida sent for revision;
- Due to the critical remarks of the Green Network's lawyers to the EIA report and consultations with local residents the placement of a production enterprise associated with hazardous chemicals was cancelled in Smorgon;
- Following consultations, inquiries and media coverage an illegal dump of construction waste was removed from the Brestskaya street.

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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS THE SCHOOL OF YOUNG ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

The school is aimed to strengthen the Belarusian environmental movement through engaging new people, who know major environmental problems, understand their right to a healthy environment, and are able to show civic activism.

The School of Young Environmental Leaders (SYEL)

is an annual educational program for those who take environmental problems as a personal challenge, look for like-minded people, and want to implement their eco-ideas. It is a chance to meet leaders of Belarusian environmental organizations, discuss the challenges and prospects of the green movement with them, and find a niche for yourself in it.

The school is aimed to strengthen the Belarusian environmental movement through engaging new people, who know major environmental problems, understand their right to a healthy environment, and are able to show civic activism.

SYEL studies take place in two stages: a two-day training at the first level, visiting a summer camp at the second level, and implementing independent environmental start-ups.

In 2015 alumni of SYEL 2014 implemented their environmental projects. One of those projects, the **free bicycle rental system "Dobry Rovar"** (Good Bicycle, <http://dobrovar.by/>), became the most discussed and popular bicycle project of the year.



Добры Ровар
bike-crossing

ПРОКАТ
с 10 июня по 15 октября 2015 года

12 городских велосипедных парковок в центральной части Минска

25 велосипедов на кодовых замках

он-лайн сервис dobrovar.by



Добры Ровар
bike-crossing

ЦЕЛЬ ПРОГРАММЫ

БЕСПЛАТНО
24 часа

Дать жителям и туристам бесплатный, или очень дешёвый доступ для кратковременных (не больше суток) поездок по городу, как альтернативу городскому транспорту и автомобилю, тем самым улучшить транспортную и экологическую обстановку

Thanks to a project by a SYEL 2014 graduate, **the first urban vegetable garden** appeared in Minsk. All those willing to participate got involved in its creation: some brought their favorite herbs to plant, others brought a whole team and built a garden-house, and somebody just came to the vegetable garden together with their children to have a good time in this hideaway amidst the stone jungle. Later the urban vegetable garden began hosting environmental educational (and not only) open air lectures, as well as campaigns of the Green Network, such as the Earth Day.

"Ekodvorik" (Eco-yard), a project by SYEL graduates: under the project activists chose yard in Kamennaya Gorka district, where they began to implement their idea. They planted a lawn with various herbs (chamomile, tansy, clover, geranium and others), fashioned furniture from used pallets, put an educational ekodisplay and developed a guide to environmentally friendly lifestyle that is shared with the residents of the yard. Opening of the yard was held with songs and dances to the accompaniment of a Belarusian folk band, and was full of quizzes and master classes.



In 2015, the second-level SYEL was held in coordination with the educational program of the Center of Environmental Solutions – “Eco-start”, and gathered 44 participants in a picturesque country estate near Minsk. The year turned out to be fruitful and full of environmental start-ups, because many SYEL 2015 alumni have already managed to implement their projects. Here are some of them:

Environmental workshop “Green Up”

Promotion of vegetarianism, billboards on separate collection of waste - all these are fragments of the mosaic, which Maksim Rylkov, Green Up project coordinator and SYEL 2015 graduate decided to put together. He planned to make the knowledge of the participants of his project about the environment more holistic. Maksim held an environmental workshop for 16 people selected from 45 applicants. After completing the course, the group continues to communication in the framework of an environmental debate club.

“Pure sightseeing” competition

Those who will collect most garbage in the historic sites will receive a prize – Tamara Zaitseva, SYEL graduate from Gomel, invented such a competition called “Pure sightseeing”. The competition was held at the forum of a website “Globe of Belarus”. What are the outcomes of a project, which lasted only 3 months? The figures speak for themselves: 221 site cleaned and more than 10 000 liters of waste disposed of.

Cleaned during the competition:

64

monuments to the fallen
in the Great Patriotic War,
memorials and graves

39

Orthodox churches, including ruins

23

Manor complex, including
the duke's houses, parks,
distilleries, stables and
other outbuildings

20

mounds, settlements
and castle sites

19

monuments of nature

13

historic buildings

9

stones and boulders, relating
to natural monuments
of national importance

8

fortification facilities

7

Catholic churches

6

historic buildings

3

castles

3

mills

3

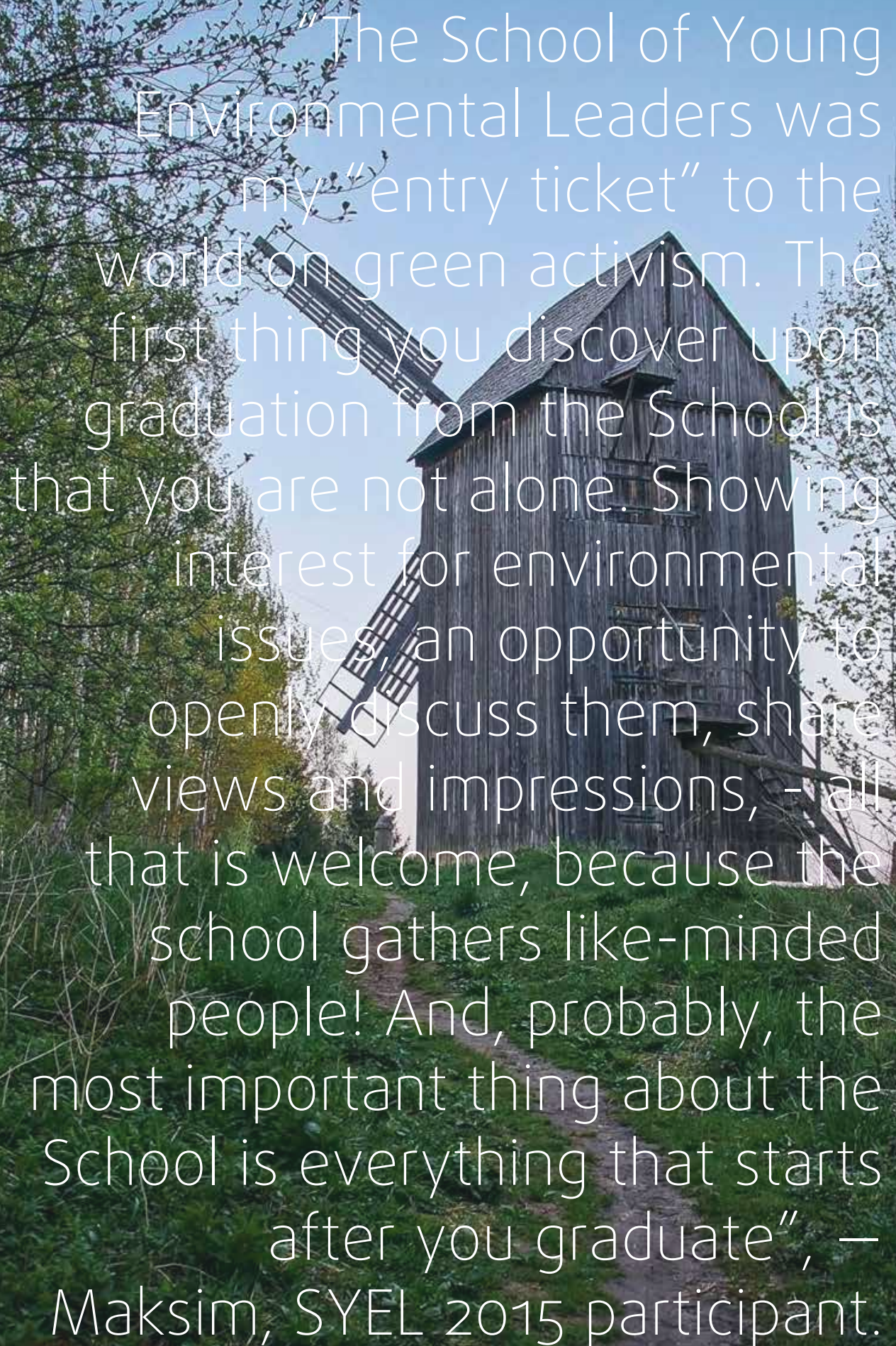
synagogues

2

points of the Struve arc

2

stone crosses

A photograph of a traditional wooden windmill with a tall, dark wooden body and a multi-bladed cap. The windmill is situated in a lush green field with a dirt path leading towards it. The background is filled with various trees, some with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow and orange. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

“The School of Young Environmental Leaders was my “entry ticket” to the world on green activism. The first thing you discover upon graduation from the School is that you are not alone. Showing interest for environmental issues, an opportunity to openly discuss them, share views and impressions, - all that is welcome, because the school gathers like-minded people! And, probably, the most important thing about the School is everything that starts after you graduate”, – Maksim, SYEL 2015 participant.

Antiplastic campaign “Thank you”

Through his project, Leonid Piliptsevich wanted to draw attention of Belarusians to the issue of excessive use of plastic bags and plastic package, as well as promote refusal from using them for purchases. The author of the project developed a poster with thanks to those customers who re-use plastic bags for shopping. Several supermarkets have endorsed the idea already and are eager to cooperate.

Illegal dumps in the countryside (Brest-Pinsk)

Removing piles of rubbish in the vicinity of villages together with local residents – such a goal was set by the project implementers Gregory Terentiev and his team. In four rural councils, two in Pinsk and two in Brest region, in collaboration with the local administration and with the help of volunteers, they removed dumps, told about it to the locals, and even held 3 tours to the recycling plant in Brest. The project team registered their own NGO “Earth Time”, which is already successfully developing results achieved after the SYEL.



How to expand the comfort zone through waste separation

Understanding what should be thrown into one or another sorting container, how types of waste differ between themselves and which items are not processed – this is what Julia Pesetskaya decided to explain to Minsk dwellers under her project.

The project resulted in the improvement of a container platform (Krasnaya street 22). This is a public thoroughfare. Julia and artist Eugene (Yaugen Zhenshen) painted sun and an autumn forest on the container site. Also, information posters are to be installed to tell what can be thrown in this or that container. As a result, the crew are going to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of this approach and offer it to the entire housing and utilities system.

“One exemplary site will not change the situation as a whole. But it should push people to the start and expand the boundaries of comfort”, – said **Julia**.



“Eco-start” Restart

SYEL and “Ecostart” alumni came to a conclusion that the city lacks events where environmentally-minded communities can be formed. Jointly they organized a true eco-picnic. The picnic’s agenda was full of events: yoga classes, “absolution of eco-sins”, free bicycle diagnostics, painting on eco-bags and many more.

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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS THE SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEGAL ADVISERS

“After attending the School of Environmental Legal Advisers I believed that healthy and environmentally friendly lifestyle are more than just an idea or a dream, they are a natural right to life in an environment and surroundings favorable to us. It was really interesting, especially the approach to resolving local issues. Thank you once again, and may there be more such inspiring events”, — Gena SELA 2015 participant.

School of Environmental Legal Advisers who want to become competent legal advisers to protect the rights of citizens to a healthy environment, to help people learn how to protect their rights on their own, as well as to participate in the conservation of wildlife.

The program was developed in cooperation with experienced trainers, lawyers, rights activists and people who directly advise citizens, and know firsthand what problems the newcomers will face. And these are not only legal issues, but also communication mechanisms and skills, holding public campaigns, and information work.



Within the framework of the school its participants learned:

- What environmental law is;
- How to work with Belarusian nature protection legislation;
- How to work with requests from citizens who resort to environmental legal advisers for help;
- Got acquainted with environmental legal practitioners.

THE GREEN PORTAL

“I have been reading the Portal for several years already and this is the only source I trust on environmental matters. Most of all I am interested in the section “Urban Ecology”, but I follow the events calendar, too. By the way, I began to notice that my own knowledge of environmental matters has improved, so I educate my friends now and then”, — Mikhail, a reader of the Green Portal.

The Green Portal is the main information resource featuring original materials and up to date environmental news from Belarus and all around the world, a platform for communication and information exchange, a meeting place for ambitious ideas and expert opinions.

The Green Portal crew brings together more than 30 motivated caring people, who promote environmental values into the lives of Belarusians.

The Green Portal in figures:

50 000

visitors monthly

3

regional branches: in Grodno,
Gomel and Brest

>1 000

copyright materials annually

>30

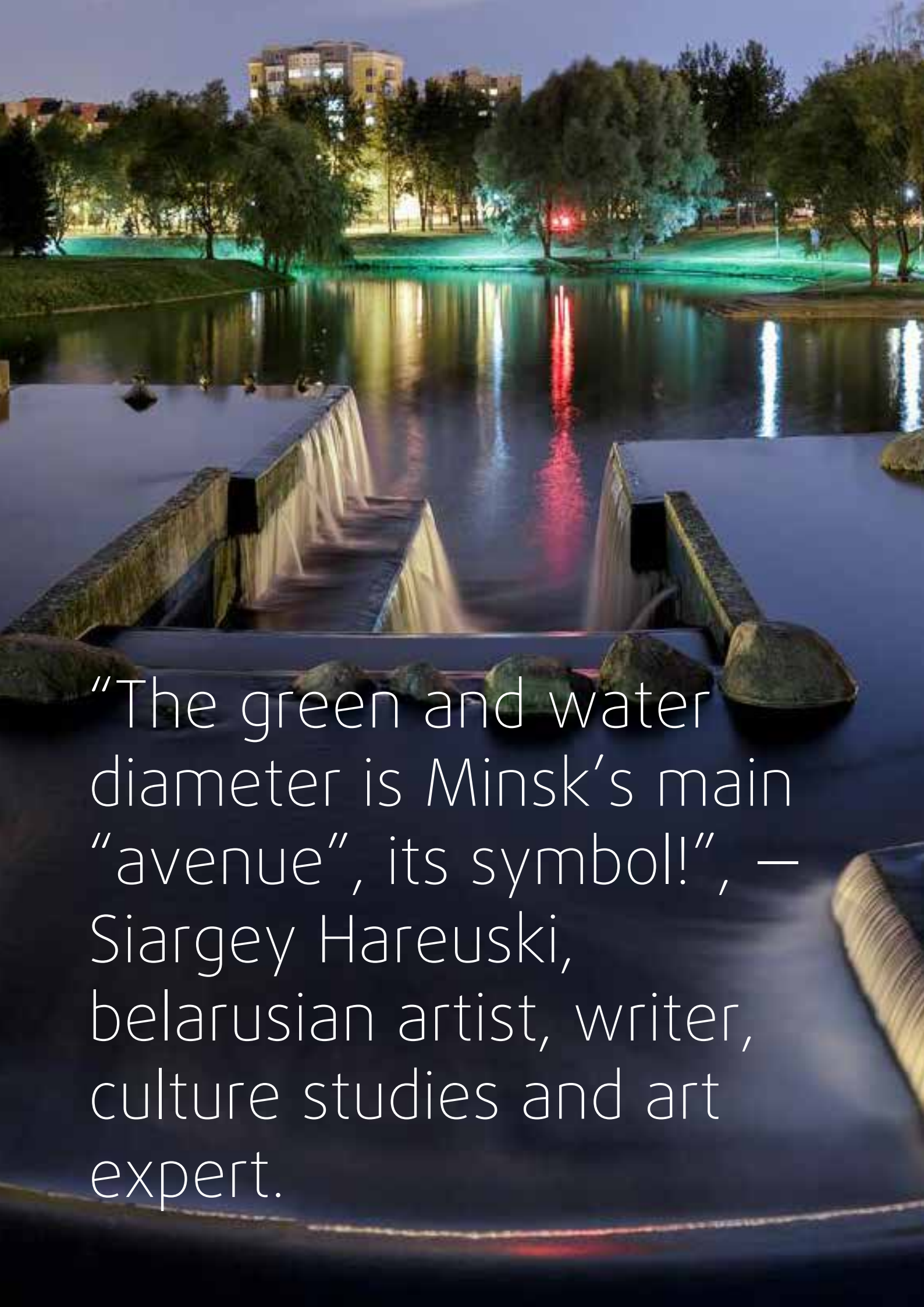
journalists

12 000

subscribers in social networks

In addition to competitions, promotions and information campaigns journalists of the Green Portal cover the most important environmental events in Belarus and the world in an objective, versatile and appealing manner.

In 2015, wonderful expert volunteers, such as **editorial director of campaigns of the mail.ru group Sergei Paranko, blogger Denis Blisch Marina Zagorskaya ("Zavtra Tvoei Strany" (Tomorrow of Your Country) representatives of BelaPAN, CityDog.info, and representatives of the Belarusian Association of Journalists** became consultants and coaches for the team of the Green Portal.



“The green and water diameter is Minsk’s main “avenue”, its symbol!”, – Siargey Hareuski, belarusian artist, writer, culture studies and art expert.

Outreach campaigns of the Green Portal Water-green diameter as business card of Minsk

For the water and green diameter not to seem something mysterious and impersonal for the city, the Green Portal's team decided to hold an unusual outreach campaign. Sculptors, urbanists and architects, historians, journalists, photographers, culture studies experts and well-known musicians told why it is important to keep the water and green diameter of Minsk, and what interesting stories are connected with this place for them.



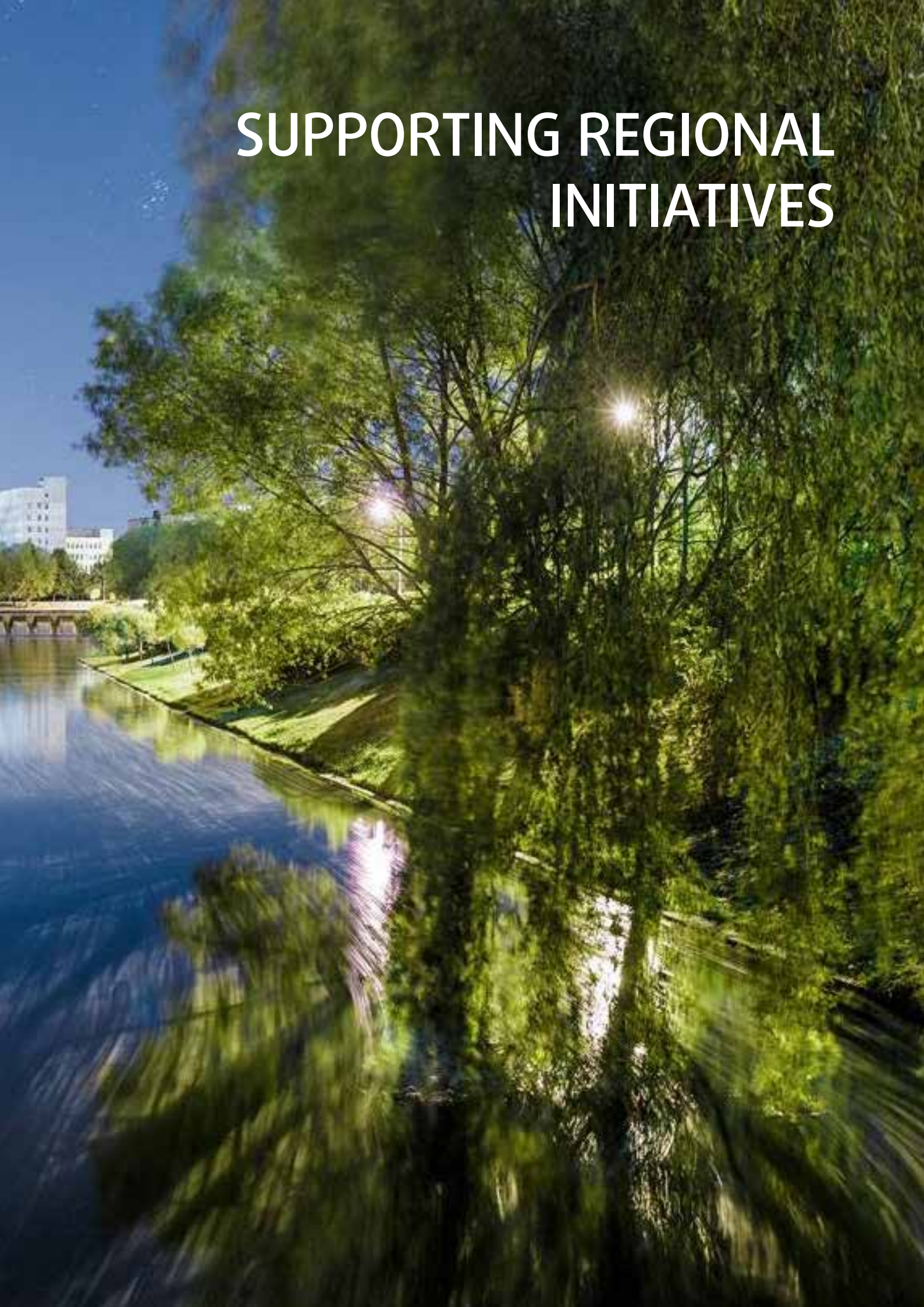
In 2016 the Green Portal's team plans to open a branch in Vitebsk and hold a series of professional improvement workshops for environmental journalists and editors.

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“Lots of things are connected with spots on the green and water diameter. For example, long ago, on winter nights I used to go for walks with my first girlfriend to Loshytsa, and we went to Komsomolskoye lake for picnics with my first band “Mroya”, – Liavon Volski, musician.

SUPPORTING REGIONAL INITIATIVES



Along with support for SYEL graduates' start-ups in 2015, Green Network, in cooperation with the **Forum Syd** supported several environmental start-ups by regional organizations and initiatives. The condition of the contest of ideas was that the idea was supposed to be developed by at least two or more regional groups, which, in our opinion, was to strengthen professional ties and enrich the experience of cooperation between various organizations working in the same area. In May, an independent panel selected from 11 proposals 36 applications, which were successfully implemented later. Throughout the entire period of their implementation, Green Network provided ongoing support to the authors of ideas. Our experts accompanied all stages of implementation of projects and carried out information and legal support.



“The main thing for me is to see long-term effects of my actions”, sums up Maxim.

“VeloGorsk”: start with simple cyclists

City of miners, an industrial city — this way visitors often see Soligorsk. **Maksim Reut**, who lives here and owns a small private business, views it as a Cycling City. He initiated the “VeloGorsk” project.

The purpose of the project is development of cycling, and the means for it is creation and installation of eight bicycle parkings for 10 slots each by forces of students of Soligorsk secondary vocational colleges and colleges. Together with the college students the design of parking lots was developed, and then they produced them out of scrap materials using the technical facilities of their educational institutions. Naturally, with the full cooperation of administration and teachers.

Man for birds: how to preserve the Falcon Kestrel in Grodno

Special wooden boxes for nests were made participants of the project "Save Falcon Kestrel in Grodno" under supervision of **Dmitry Vintchevski** of Grodno city branch of the NGO "APB BirdLife Belarus". The project aims to protect the birds in the city. The project supported appearance of 10 nest boxes and 30 sign plates for Grodno and Brest. On the tablets, it is indicated that Falcons usually nest in that place, and where to turn if you need help. Also, work towards training staff of local utility organizations was carried out.

"The most important thing for me is the pleasure that my friends and I get from meeting with birds, from peculiar moments of their lives, and most of all - the opportunity to help, if any", - says **Dmitry**.



How eared owl got 150 nests near Malorita

A biological method of protecting crops from rodents was used in the framework of the project "Owls help people." Students of the Malorita district gymnasium made 150 boxes to serve as nests for the Long-eared Owl, and put them in the district's agricultural buildings. The district, according to rough estimates, is home to around 200 pairs of these birds. Discussions were held on the importance of owls with local farmers.

"We help those who cannot ask for help themselves. Agricultural organizations, local communities, school children and other people learn about the owls and the challenges they face in the human environment ... I think we more than anyone understand the need for such action, so we cannot but act" - said **Denis Kitel** from West -Polesiye regional branch of the NGO "APB BirdLife Belarus".



“This is an opportunity to promote eco-friendly lifestyle by simple examples, and give people an opportunity to believe that by with their own forces they can change the outlook of their yard and much more”, — Lena Shtyk and Alina Derevianko.

A festival of one yard that united neighbors

Neighbors in apartment buildings often do not know each other, and if they are familiar, then do not do anything together for the benefit of the yard of communal use and the quality of life. Residents of one of the yards in Brest decided to deal with this problem. That way the idea of the “Ekalios” festival was born. It was implemented by volunteers of a Brest art platform “Krylya holopa” (“Wings of a slave”) for the residents of the house, in the basement of which they rent a room.

During the festival, together with locals they improved the yard, discussed environmental challenges that the city faces and how to lead a healthier life together, made plans for the future and just got acquainted.



“Bicycle 2.0”: not just solve the city’s problems, but develop it together

Making cyclists better educated and achieving recognition of the bicycle as means of transport at the Belarusian-Polish border – that was the goal set for themselves by implementers of the project “Bicycle 2.0” that took place in Brest.

“It is an internal need, - says initiator of the project and campaigner “Za VeloBrest” (For Cycling Brest) **Vladimir Krasko**. – When you want something to change, and there are people by your side who want the same. So you do it. Because if you do not begin – nothing will change all by itself”.

VeloBoom: bicycles and traffic rules became closer and more accessible to schoolchildren

A cycling school where not only rules are taught, but also assistance is provided to those willing to master this means of transport – that is what the VeloBoom initiative became in Grodno.

“It is chance for oneself and for others, especially children, to become more useful for the nature, city, country, planet, to put new spirit into the system of education and make school more appealing in Grodno”, - thinks **Galina Bogdan**, project coordinator.



“Climate in the family”: How to avoid contributing to global climate change

Not only polar bears, but all of us are concerned with climate change. That is why “Children’s Eco Workshops” decided to explain residents of Lida and Shchuchin through household matters that each of them can contribute to solving climate change problems, and what are the ways of reducing environmental impact. 7 schools and 150 schoolchildren took part in the project.

“I consider speaking about the links between household chores and climate important, as for many of us climate is a topic from the geography textbook, and not something that surrounds us and has an impact on us”, - tells **Yelizaveta Kovtiak**, project coordinator.

Stories about environment, E-supplements and potato chips from a childrens eco-studio in Grodno

Little attention is devoted to environment in children’s upbringing, and that is what project coordinator for “Children’s eco-studios in Grodno” **Rymma Ushkevich** decided to take care of. She established a children’s eco-studio that will work in the city permanently.

Potato chips are tasty, but bring little use, why turtles die in oceans, why leaves in the park should not be removed, what are E-supplements and what happens if you eat them frequently and in big quantities, - that is just a short list of topics played around with kids and their parents in the studio. 18 lessons attended by more than 150 kids were held in three months.

“I love working with children, and care of the environment is one of my personal values, - tells **Rymma**. - That’s why children’s eco-studio for kids aged 4-10, according to my plan, develops a more conscious and gentle attitude to the environment”.

Green farms can be found on a special map

There are ecofarmers in the country, but modern media do not always know about them. Creating a specialized map that would serve as a catalogue of such farms was the goal set for themselves by authors of the project "Increasing presence of eco-farmers on the Internet". At the moment the map features 26 farms and farmhouses (Brest region).

"I saw several maps, and there are issues with them. Many of them are empty – just names and surnames, - tells **Svetlana Tokarchuk**, developer of the map, - and we want to maintain our map constantly".

The purity of springs in Baranovichy area improved, but in some of them water turned out to be contaminated

Finding, purifying and improving the springs became the goal of the students' club of Baranovichy University, PA "Nerush" and project coordinator for "Ensuring environmental safety through involvement of residents into protection of springs" **Olga Maisiuk**.

They did it together with local residents. They found more than 40 springs, including those of historic and cultural value, and made quality analysis of water in 18 of them.

"People get drinking water from springs, - says **Olga**. Our goal was to find out and tell locals whether this can be done, and also get local residents and students involved in improvement and protection of springs without damaging local ecosystems. Furthermore, I am personally interested in conservation of our natural heritage."

Owners of country houses attempted to make them more eco-friendly in Gomel region

Do not dig too deep to keep the soil more fertile – this and other pieces of advice were provided to owners of country houses in one of country house communities in Gomel region. **Irina Lenivko**, project coordinator for "Environmental protection in country houses: environmental tips for owners of farmlands and country houses", saw those among country house owners, who would be keen to know how to make their estates eco-friendlier.

The goal of the project was to produce clear and interesting information materials for country house owners. Furthermore, hands-on training was held, and participants of the workshop decided to create a library and meet up once in a while to discuss their success stories. To promote information to broader public, leaflets on the danger of pesticides and certain fertilizers were prepared under the project. In 2016 these leaflets will be distributed in suburban trains and commuter trains.

"I am interested in this, and people at work call me "a freak". I am one of those few people among those I know, who sort waste", - says **Irina**.

SUPPORT TO DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN MOVEMENT IN REGIONS

The green movement in Belarus will not become strong and powerful if it is concentrated in Minsk only. That is why we continue to actively support regional activists.

BREST

Public associations and initiatives interested in nature and the state of environment are not so few in number in Brest region. However, how efficiently they cooperate with each other is a different thing. However, interaction is vital, and as only that way, they can achieve the set goals promptly. That is why this autumn the Forum **“Environmental initiatives of the Brest region”** was held in Brest with support of the Green Network.

The event was organized by the following environmental public organizations: “Earth Time”, APB BirdLife Belarus, “Ecohome”, “Nerush”, and the list of participants included not only NGOs and media, but also representatives of the authorities, such as staff of the Brest Region Committee on Natural Resources and environmental conservation.



One of the main items on the agenda was holding roundtable discussions, where the prospects of the oblast’s green movement development, and issues of interaction between NGOs and public administration bodies were debated. As a result, the participants shared lessons learned with one another, learned about programs of mutual cooperation and just got acquainted, which is also important.

The idea of holding such a forum came to the young public association “Earth Time”. In 2015 all participants of this organization underwent training in the framework of the School of Young Environmental Leaders. After graduation, the newly minted activists decided to establish an organization of their own. Having listened to the presentation on the Green Watch movement the team decided to take up the function of resolving local environmental issues in Brest and Pinsk.

“We want to bring some of the existing campaigns of the Green Network to our regional level, adopt the existing mechanisms, and implement several projects for them to cross over and support each other. We also want to continue our campaign against illegal dumps in the countryside. We want to incorporate educational programs in our clean-up campaigns to avoid appearance of a new dump in the same place in half a year. We want new containers to be placed there, and people to become more responsible, local utilities to get involved. We hope that this will help to promote the green movement in Brest region further”. **Gregory**, founder of the PA “Earth Time”



“In the near future, I plan to organize an event of my own and continue to take part in city environmental initiatives. I wish more people could understand that bearing the proud name of a Citizen implies an active civil position, and sustainable development of the country depends on every little thing in our everyday life. I am most grateful to trainers, who spurred my consciousness and interest. You make this world a better place”, — Valeriya, an Ecoclub graduate (Grodno).

GRODNO

In 2015 the Grodno Green Portal turned exactly 1 year. During this time, the portal has become not only a source of information with the current news from the environmental arena, but also a platform for discussion of environmental problems in the region, where you can find possible solutions.

The **Green Phone (+375 33 600 02 30)** helps to search for answers to popular questions and environmental solutions. Lawyers of the Green Network and Aarhus Centre in Grodno help respond to the requests. The most interesting cases and frequently asked questions appear on the website greenbelarus.info

Campaigns & Events

Grodno did not remain aloof from the **“Earth Hour”** international campaign. This time those who left their homes turning off the electricity, could choose to visit the class in hatha yoga, a meditative exercise for women or an evening by candlelight in the anti-café. The highlight of the campaign was turning off the big screen in the Soviet square, lights on some of the administrative buildings and shops, as well as the central cafes and restaurants.

On September 22 Grodno traditionally joined the global campaign **“Car-free Day”**. The bicycle ride organized in the framework of the campaign became the biggest bicycle event of the year, gathering more than 400 participants and campaigners. A bicycle of people (the logo “VeloGrodno”) photographed from a height speaks louder than words.

In spring a series of meetings on urban studies was held in Grodno. The speakers were experts in the field of architecture, urban development, social planning. New approaches to the development of the city, motorization and land use, and a friendlier city for older people were topics discussed at these lectures. It should be noted that the outcome of a lecture about the city for the elderly was the development of specific proposals on making Grodno more convenient for the people of the “third age”. These proposals were sent to the Grodno City Executive Committee.

In order to fill in the white spots in the Wikipedia world encyclopedia, the Green Network activists, together with the organization “Center “Third sector” and the “Phalanster” conducted a **Wiki-Weekend** training session, where the participants were able to complete the Belarusian version of encyclopedia with articles on environmental and cycling-related topics.

Environmental club

Throughout the spring activists of the Green Network Alesia Yefimova and Yana Sidorenko held meetings of the Ecoclub in Grodno. What is sustainable development, how to save money while living in the city, what environmental issues can be solved with one’s own effort — this is just a short list of the club’s topics. Apart from club meetings, participants developed their own projects that will be implemented in 2016: a department bicycle rally, a waste paper collection campaign and a campaign against littering with cigarette stabs in the city.

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An event that is held bi-annually and unites practically all active organizations around the country. In 2015, the issue of national environmental policy development in Belarus topped the agenda.

acer



IV BELARUS ECO NGO FORUM



At the beginning of the Forum outcomes of research and independent assessments of environmental management development in our country were presented. Following expert discussions, participants adopted plans for common action in different areas of environmental protection in the coming years. Furthermore, a number of resolutions were adopted on such matters as the role of Belarus in the new global climatic agreement and the national climate policy, promotion of the right of citizens to participation in environmental decision-making, implementation of clauses of the Aarhus Convention in Belarus, SPNA management policy; policy for management of dangerous chemical and medical waste etc.

The Forum brought together over 120 participants from more than 40 organizations, as well as representatives of the Embassy of France in the Republic of Belarus, Global Environmental Facility, national delegation of the European Commission, the World Bank, Belarusian Orthodox Church, UNDP, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, and other key participants.

Traditionally, the Green Network was in the Forum Steering Committee, as well as other Belarus' leading environmental organizations — Center of Environmental Solutions, APB BirdLife Belarus, Ecopartnership and Ecohome, as well as a new organization Bahna.

RESEARCH

Most Belarusians get concerned with environmental issues less often than about growing prices or low salaries. Another unexpected fact was that environmental pollution turned out to be more important than crime and unemployment.

How efficiently Belarus citizens participate in environmental decision-making

In order to answer this question the Green Network initiated a research **“Practice of public participation in environmental decision-making”** that was taken on by the Center for European Transformation.

In the researchers’ opinion, public has a chance to get involved in environmental decision-making only at later stages. Experts admitted that people lack knowledge of the decision-making procedure and their role in it, as well as poor informing about the decisions taken.

However, the city dwellers’ opinion is still taken into account; when local residents take active part in a timely manner, formulate competent requirements for changing the project format to a more environmentally sound, or when public authorities are willing to reduce social pressure.

Ways of improving practices of public participation in decision-making:

- Move public consultations to an earlier stage;
- Ensure due account of public opinion;
- Create mechanisms for building communication between public authorities and general public that would allow to negotiate interests;
- Resolve issues with informing, outreach work and use of more efficient methods;
- Ensure expert support during public consultations;
- Work with local administrations.

How important environmental issues are to Belarusians?

To answer this important question that is of great interest to all environmentalists, Green Network initiated a social research “Measuring and assessing the importance of environmental issues in Belarus. Mapping attitude to environmental activists and studying the motivation of citizens to participate in resolving environmental issues” that was carried out by the SATIO group of companies in 2015.

Most Belarusians get concerned with environmental issues less often than about growing prices or low salaries. Another unexpected fact was that environmental pollution turned out to be more important than crime and unemployment.

However, the research witnessed quite high level of interest to environmental issues among general public (73,8% are interested in the state of environment)

What environmental issues are Belarusians concerned with most?

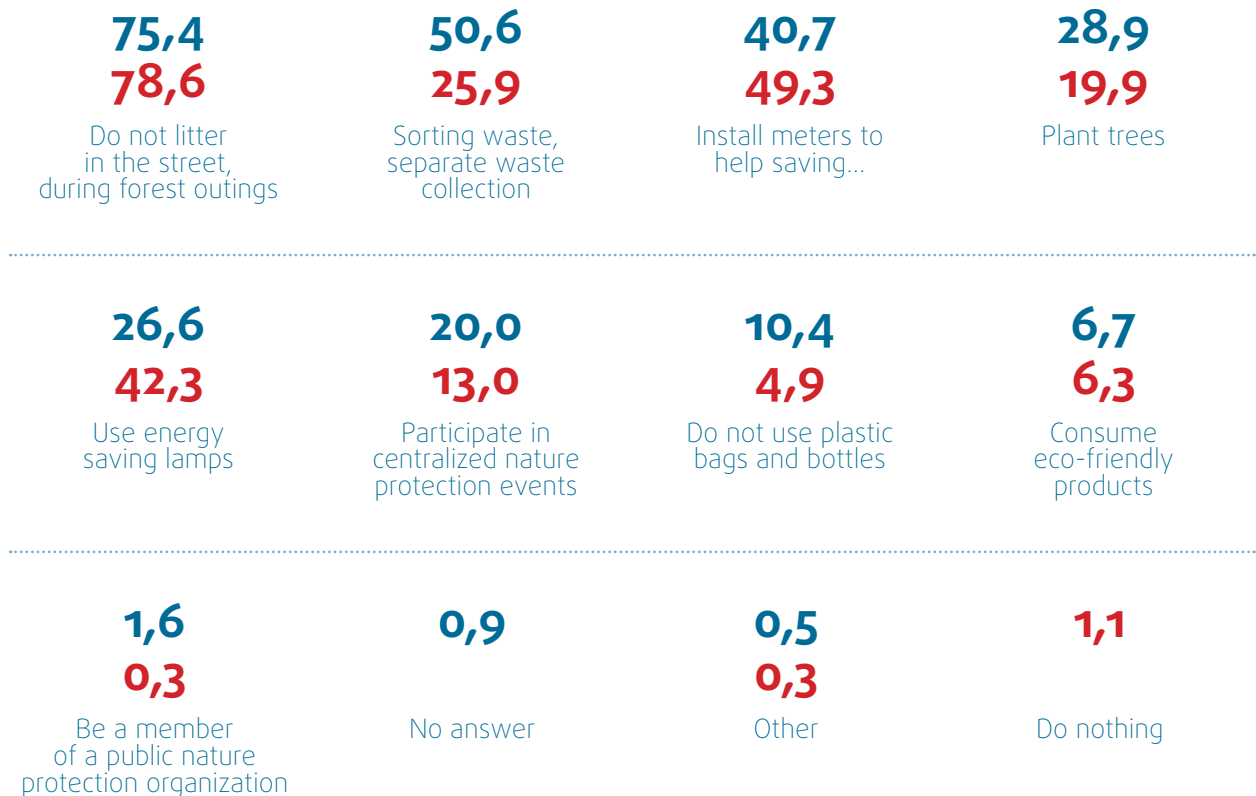
From the point of view of Belarusians, the top 5 challenging environmental issues are as follows:

- Atmospheric pollution;
- Pollution of water basins;
- Impact of the Chernobyl disaster;
- Contamination of fresh water sources;
- Illegal dumps.

The research raised the question concerning sites under construction that raise most fears among Belarusians from the environmental viewpoint. Almost every other person called the construction of the atomic power plant in Ostrovets (52,5%) and construction in green areas of the cities (46,0%) devastating.

A peculiar thing to mention is that almost every other participant of the survey (53,6%) was sure that in general Belarusians have poor environmental culture.

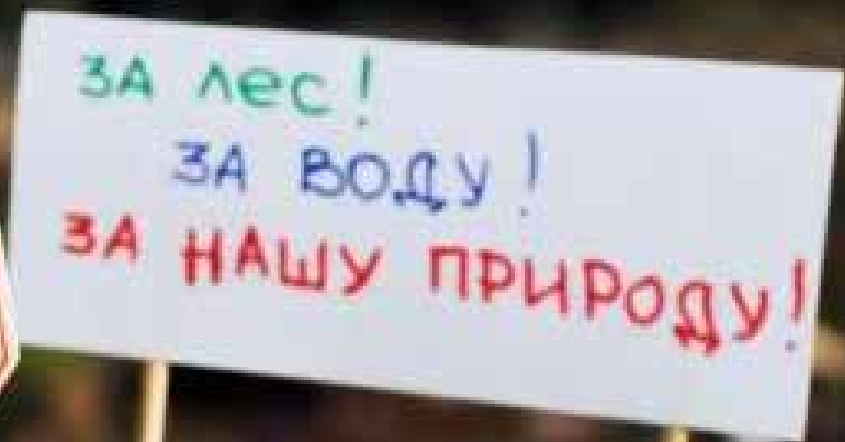
Public participation in environmental conservation and nature protection



**Blue – country's citizens; *Red – you personally.*



COOPERATION



“It’s too late to be a pessimist». My creed is to act, and that’s what I stick to. Since we’re here, we should love the era we live in”, — Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

The French cooperation

Climate change became one of 2015 French foreign policy top priorities. The Green Network was the Embassy's key partner in all events organized prior to the Paris COP21 Climate Change Conference.


We carried out **"My nature protection snapshot"** photo contest involving both amateurs and professional photographers. The key criteria was a keen interest in environmental protection and a keen attitude to the future of the globe.

The total number of participants made up over 320 people with 1500 snapshots including, apart from works from Belarus, pictures from Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova. As a result of harsh competition only 20 finalists were chosen.

For French learners the Embassy and Green Network activists held several exciting workshops, i.e. on how to select green and healthy products, how to "read" their ingredients, what climate change is and what an average person can do to prevent it, various eco-quizzes, green mail for sending eco-postcards to parents and friends worldwide. Probably, for some participants it was their first encounter with the ecological discourse, however, judging by the reviews received, this encounter was a positive experience.

The events, organized by the Embassy prior to the Paris COP21 Climate Change Conference culminated in the **"Home"** exhibition by the famous French film director and photographer **Yann Arthus Bertrand**, brought from France – a series of photographs of the Earth made from the bird's eye view telling us a story of our incredibly beautiful planet. Additionally, the legendary "Home" film presented by the film director personally on his first visit to Belarus, was shown in Minsk. After the film show, the audience had a chance to meet up and have a face-to-face conversation with Yann.





“Thank you for the chance to experience this little world of the big cinema; now we’re better aware of our loss and gain, and it’s just a beginning”, — Igor, contest finalist.

Cinema is green

In association with the Social Film Works, successful commercial film companies and supported by the NGO "Belarusian Union of Cinematographers" we launched a project named "**Kinosprint**", which is unique for Belarus.

"Kinosprint" – is a contest for filmmakers testing their ability to make social one-reelers using the language of art. The theme chosen by the arranging parties was ecology and environment protection.

The winners of the contest were three teams of young people: film directors, scriptwriters, producers, and operators. They received the best-quality reviews, tips, master-class workshops from acting national professional filmmakers: Yurii Igrusha, Andrei Kureichik, Andrei Polupanov, Sergei Yakubovski, Alexander Aleynikov and Alexander Levenchuk.

Apart from valuable experience, the leading teams gained equipment and properties, as well as assistance in promoting their films at international film festivals.

Green Network experts consulted the participants on various hot issues concerning environmental protection. The ecologists focused on showing the participants how exciting environmental activity can be, how global large-scale problems are related to our future, individual behavior, culture and habits.

So what films were presented?





“Twenty sixteen”

A post apocalyptic story.

Humanity's perished, there is only one survivor. He lives in a quasi-house, which he had built himself. In vain he desperately sends signals, writes and sends letters... However, once, breaking his mail box, he discovers a postcard in a pile of his own letters with a picture of a big city. He makes a decision...



“Happiness meter”

A drama about a tragic soviet time story.

The story tells us of a small soviet-time town in the late 80-s, where a young and happy family lives: a father, a mother and a son. Once the father leaves unexpectedly for a business trip and later returns with a weird object, allegedly thought by the son to be a happiness meter. The boy thinks it's a gift from his father, and together with his friend they decide to measure happiness level in their native town.

“Relay race”

A road-movie comedy drama telling a story of typical Belarusians.

A dacha resident finds a World War bomb on his land lot. He takes it to the police station, since all the weapons found in Belarus have to be submitted to the police. However, he has no idea how far this bomb can take him...

Following the film screening in Minsk renowned producers will start promotion of the Belarusian movie at international film festivals.

Contacts:
pressgreenbel@gmail.com

LOOKING AHEAD



In 2016 we again invite everyone to join our ongoing campaigns, outreach and educational work, or develop your own unique solutions. Next year we plan to put more effort into helping our friends and colleagues from environmental initiatives from all regions of Belarus to find more supporters in their activity, establish dialogue with public authorities and international partners.

We cast our nets in search for people who care about Earth and one another, the environment and environmental challenges. Green Network is a broad movement of people that make do not differentiate between their own and someone else's Earth and love the planet the way it was created!

Opportunities that open up through participation in Green Network's activities:

- You can receive or promote your up-to-date environmental information about important environmental developments and trends in Belarus and around the world;
- You can participate in educational events and public campaigns or develop your own ones;
- You will be able to contribute to planning and implementation of Green Network's activities, initiate and implement environmental projects and campaigns, develop and carry out your own public campaigns to protect nature and the right of people to a favorable environment;
- You will have a chance to exchange valuable experience and involve new motivated people in your activity;
- You will have access to support and consultations from experts, environmental lawyers, information promotion assistance, help in search for partners and fund raising;
- You will be able to take an active part in formation of the Belarusian civil society and development of various areas of the national environmental policy.

If you are willing to contribute to establishment of a community based on respect for nature, sustainable development principles and peace culture, if our mission appeals to you and you are interested in the areas of our activity, if you are eager to cooperate with organizations of the Green Network or join us, please contact us by [e-mail \[pressgreenbel@gmail.com\]\(mailto:pressgreenbel@gmail.com\)](mailto:pressgreenbel@gmail.com).

A man with reddish-brown hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt, stands with his arms crossed against a white brick wall. The lighting is soft, highlighting his features and the texture of the wall.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks all those who were by our side, helped us, and supported us in the challenging 2015 – our colleagues, partners, volunteers and friends. We hope you will stay with us in 2016 on the way to a sustainable green Belarus!

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Climate Action Network EECCA

Danish Outdoor Council

Forum Syd

Leo Burnett Belarus

Administration of the Central Children's Park named after M. Gorkiy

The Assembly of NGOs

"Wostray" Art Studio

Brest Waste Recycling Plant

"MonkeyFood" Vegan Fast Food

"Center for Regional Development under the Gomel Democratic Forum" Establishment

Grodno City and Oblast State Traffic Directorate

State Nature Protection Institution "Narochansky National Park"

State Nature Protection Institution "Belovezhskaya Pushcha" National Park"

State Nature Protection Institution "Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve"

Grodno Oblast Committee for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection

Energy Efficiency Department of the State Standardization Committee of the Republic of Belarus

Human Library Initiative

Belarusian Language Course "Mova Nanova"

Cultur and Information Establishment " Social Cinema Workshop"

Flying University

International Charity Organization "Environment-Law-People"

International Public Association "Gender Prospects"

International Public Association "Ecoproject"

International Public Association "Ecopartnership"

International Consortium "EuroBelarus"

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus

Minsk Urbanistic Platform

National Academy of Science of the Republic of Belarus
National Ecological Center of Ukraine
Non-Governmental Agency "Center of Environmental Solutions"
Friends of the Earth Norway (Norges Naturvernforbundet)
Non-Government Organization "APB BirdLife Belarus"
Non-Governmental Organization "Centre for informational support of public initiatives
"Third sector"
The Embassy of France in the Republic of Belarus
"Lesorub" Enterprise (industrial climbers)
National Landscape Reserve "Yelnia"
"Society and Environment" Analytics and Resource Center
Supermarket Chain "Green"
Golden Age University Program (PA "Third Sector")
Pontis Foundation
Interaction Fund
Center for European Transformation
Center for Legal Transformation "Lawtrend"
Czech Non-Governmental Organization "Civic Belarus"
Environmental Establishment "Agro-Eco-Culture"
Environmental Information Center "Eco-Info", Belarus NAS
Youth Education Center "Fialta"
"City" Open Laboratory" Platform (Saint-Petersburg)
Talaka.by Platform
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Pete Pavlov

Sergei Bashlykevich and "Leibonik" band

Hummuskiss

Navi

Reikt

Shuma

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Antikafe "Dom Fishera"

Antikafe "Zhivoye Vremia" (Live Time), Grodno

Art-cafe "Beetlejuice"

"Hooligan" Bar

"Imaguru" Business Club

Contemporary Art Gallery "Ź"

"Zerno" Cafe

Creative Space "CEH"

Youth Education Center "Fialta"

Central Scientific Library named after Yakub Kolas under the National Academy of Science of the Republic of Belarus



**ANNEX:
LIST OF GREEN NETWORK'S
MEMBERS**

Member organizations:

1 **Public Association “Ecohome”**

“Ecohome” is a national public organization that aims to promote environmentally sound lifestyle and ideas of sustainable development. Areas of activity of the organization include promotion of environmentally sound lifestyle, environmentally friendly architecture and construction, permaculture; environmental education and art, deep ecology.

E-mail: ecohome.by@gmail.com; ecohome-ngo.by

2 **Minsk City Department of the International Union of Ecologists**

Key areas of organization’s activity include monitoring of environmental situation in Belarus, implementation of environmental protection projects; and scientific work.

E-mail: foleg@tut.by

3 **Regional Public Association “Gomel Association of Children and Youth” (ASDEMO)**

A non-profit non-governmental civil society organization with regional branches in other towns of Gomel oblast (Rechitsa, Turov, Zhlobin, Mozyr, Rogachev, Buda-Koshelevo). Priority areas of activity include nature protection and social issues.

E-mail: asdemo@gmail.com; asdemo.org

4 **Postavy Rayon Association “Ecoagrotur”**

Areas of activity of the organization: environmental protection; promotion and development of environmental, heritage, and rural tourism; education and publishing; maintenance of memorials and graves. “Ecoagrotour” unites farmers, rural inhabitants, entrepreneurs, and city dwellers.

E-mail: ecoagroturpostavy@gmail.com

5 **Environmental and Heritage Public Association
“Nerush”**

Environmental and Heritage Public Association “Nerush” is an association with voluntary participation with an environmental and historical profile established for organizing educational activities, support and development of civil society initiatives in the area of environmental protection and regional studies.

E-mail: office@nerush.org; nerush.org

6 **Public Association “Minsk Cycling Community”**

The Minsk Cycling Community was founded in 2011 by a group of activists concerned with the future of cycling movement in their own towns and in Belarus as a whole. The organization’s goal is promotion of cycling into everyday life: development of urban cycling transport, “cycling culture”, and bicycle touring, available to everyone.

E-mail: info@bike.org.by; bike.org.by

7 **Public Association of Cyclists “VeloGrodno”**

The main aim of “VeloGrodno” is promotion of the bicycle as a sustainable means of transport and active leisure, support of formation of healthy lifestyle, development of bicycle infrastructure and cyclists’ movement.

E-mail: julia.koleda@gmail.com; velogrodno.by

8 **Public Association “Bahna”**

The purpose of the public association “Bahna” is to spread the ideas of sustainable development, environmental protection and safeguarding the rights of citizens to a healthy environment. Subject of activity of the organization – protection of wildlife, specially protected natural areas and wetlands of Belarus.

E-mail: bahna.land@gmail.com; bahna.land

9 **Bereza Rayon Environmental Public Association
“EcoRegion “Yaselda”**

The goal of “EcoRegion “Yaselda” Public Association is support of sustainable social and economic development of Bereza Rayon based on comprehensive use of natural resources, increasing investments, preserving conditions for reproduction of natural and resource potential, and creation of favorable living conditions for the rayon’s population.

E-mail: eko.yaselda@mail.ru

10 **Public Association “Belarusian Committee
“Chernobyl Children”**

The main goal of the organization is to ensure safe environmental conditions in the interests of health and lives of Belarusian children through making the environmental situation healthier, formation of a healthy lifestyle, and assistance in prevention and treatment of diseases.

E-mail: nadya@melesta.ru

11 **Republican Social and Economic Public Association
“Living Partnership”**

The organization’s activity is focused around environmental protection, sustainable use of energy resources, development of non-traditional and renewable energy sources, and maintenance and improvement of people’s health. The organization strongly promotes introduction of environmental management systems in social, educational, and clerical organizations.

E-mail: office@partnership.by; partnership.by

12 **International Public Association “Ecosfera”**

The organization’s goals include attracting public attention to environmental problems, implementation of environmental and eco-social programs and campaigns, education in the environmental sphere, and protection of the right of its members to healthy environment.

E-mail: ella_i@mail.ru

Individual members:

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
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| 14. | Yaroslav Bekish | 30. | Tatyana Strizhenkova |
| 15. | Dmitriy Burenkin | 31. | Alla Sushko |
| 16. | Yevgeniy Vilskiy | 32. | Aleksandr Shepetiuk |
| 17. | Victor Yermolenkov | 33. | Anora Langar |
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| 19. | Georgiy Kozulko | 35. | Anatoly Lovkis |
| 20. | Yuliya Koleda | 36. | Inessa Bolotina |
| 21. | Olga Kremleva | 37. | Nadezhda Kuleshova |
| 22. | Igor Kutolovsky | 38. | Alexander Vinchevsky |
| 23. | Yevgeniy Lobanov | 39. | Sophia Savelova |
| 24. | Inna Panchkovskaya | 40. | Irina Usova |
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