

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

ЗЯЛЁНАЯ  
СЕТКА



GREEN  
NETWORK

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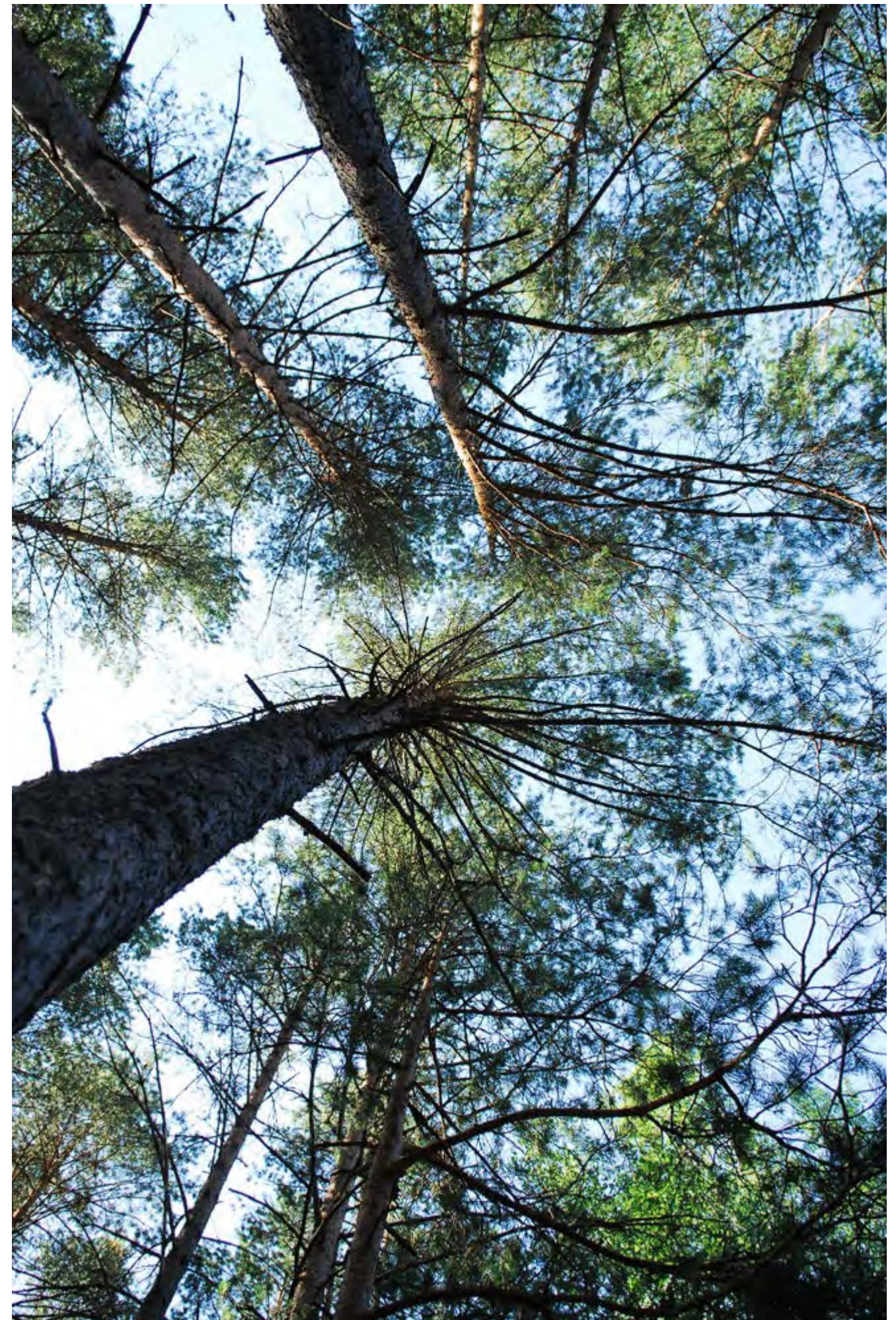


## GREEN NETWORK BELARUS 2014 ANNUAL REPORT



## CONTENTS:

06	<b>5 reasons to read this report</b>
08	<b>Meet Green Network</b>
12	<b>Our strategic areas</b>
14	<b>2014 Outcomes</b>
14	Public campaigns (to protect the right to a healthy environment)
14	● "Urban Forester"
16	● "Protect Belarusian swamps"
20	● "Climatic campaign"
24	● "Let's protect the Prip'yats oak forests"
26	Legal Service
28	"Green watch" movement
30	Educational Activities
34	Work in Regions (Gomel and Grodno Regions)
38	Environmental actions
42	Belarusian green portal <a href="http://greenbelarus.info">greenbelarus.info</a>
44	<b>Going Ahead</b>
46	<b>Media coverage and media presence</b>
50	<b>Acknowledgements</b>
54	<b>List of Green Network Members</b>
58	<b>Contacts</b>







Dear friends and colleagues!

We are glad to offer you an overview of accomplishments of Green Network in 2014, in other words, it is our annual report that you are holding in your hands. Before you decide whether to put it aside or continue reading, please read the introduction to the bottom – it will help you make the right choice.

We, GN members and authors of this report, think that you have at least five good reasons to read this document.

**Reason ONE:** We described our work in a way that will give you a clear understanding of what we did, what we achieved, and what you can join right away.

**Reason TWO:** You will see how the Belarusian green movement evolves, who our partners are, and what goals we jointly set for the future. We hope that after you finish reading the report you will have a better understanding of the reasons why nature is so important to us, and why we put so many time and efforts into it.



**Reason THREE:** If you are curious about environmental protection in Belarus, from this report you will learn how to join particular activities of Green Network, as well as its member organizations. It is because Green Network is a space, where people willing to spur positive changes in their yard, town, region, and country can find not only ideas for teamwork, but also a team of like-minded people.

**Reason FOUR:** It might be that you already have your own ideas related to addressing a certain environmental challenge you are concerned with, or that such ideas will come to your mind in the course of reading this report. In that case, we will be happy to help you implement them. Green Network is a place where you can get consultations and support, much needed knowledge and skills, and launch an environmental project or campaign of your own.

**Reason FIVE:** We welcome all and any proposals for cooperation that you might have after reading this report and appreciate any positive criticism that you might be willing to share.

## MEET GREEN NETWORK

**Green Network (GN)** unites hundreds of uneven people from the Belarusian environmental movement, experienced environmental organizations and initiatives, experts and activists.

The history of the Belarusian green movement remembers us as a simple partnership from November 6, 2007. Now the partnership comprises 12 public associations and 32 individual participants (see Annex 1). 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.

Our **MISSION** is an environmental movement for nature, people, and sustainable development of Belarus.

### GN's goals are:

- Improvement of the state of environment, addressing particular environmental problems of Belarus;
- Protection of the citizens' right to a healthy environment;
- Increasing public participation in environmental decision-making at local, national, and international level.

During 7 years of work GN has become a real instrument for mutual assistance, expert support, and interaction for Belarusians concerned with environmental protection issues, improving living standards, and guarantees for the future of our children and grandchildren.

We cooperate actively with public administration bodies, academia that share our concern of Belarus' environment, as well as a wide range of other civil society organizations and businesses.

International cooperation also constitutes one of key priorities of our activity: GN is an active participant of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, participates in coordination of the international Climate Action Network for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

We are inspired by our accomplishments despite the obstacles that occasionally appear in our way, we keep moving on and supporting each other.

## GN BOARD MEMBERS



**Konstantin Chikalov,**  
member of Public Association "Bahna"



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



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



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



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



**Nataliya Porechina,**  
project coordinator of the Center of  
Environmental Solutions



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



## Public campaigns:

- "Urban Forester"
- "Protect Belarusian swamps"
- "Climatic campaign"
- "Let's protect the Prip'yats oak forests"

Monitoring of government environmental programs and strategies

44 GN members  
(12 organizations)

>100 legal consultations  
for citizens

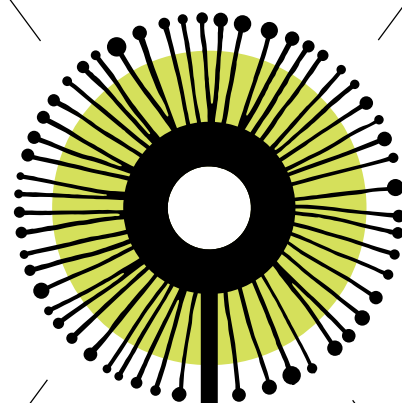
The Belarusian green portal  
[greenbelarus.info](http://greenbelarus.info)

>50 public events  
around Belarus

The Green Watch Movement

10 new start-ups from alumni  
of the School of  
Young Environmental Leaders

>300 volunteers for GN

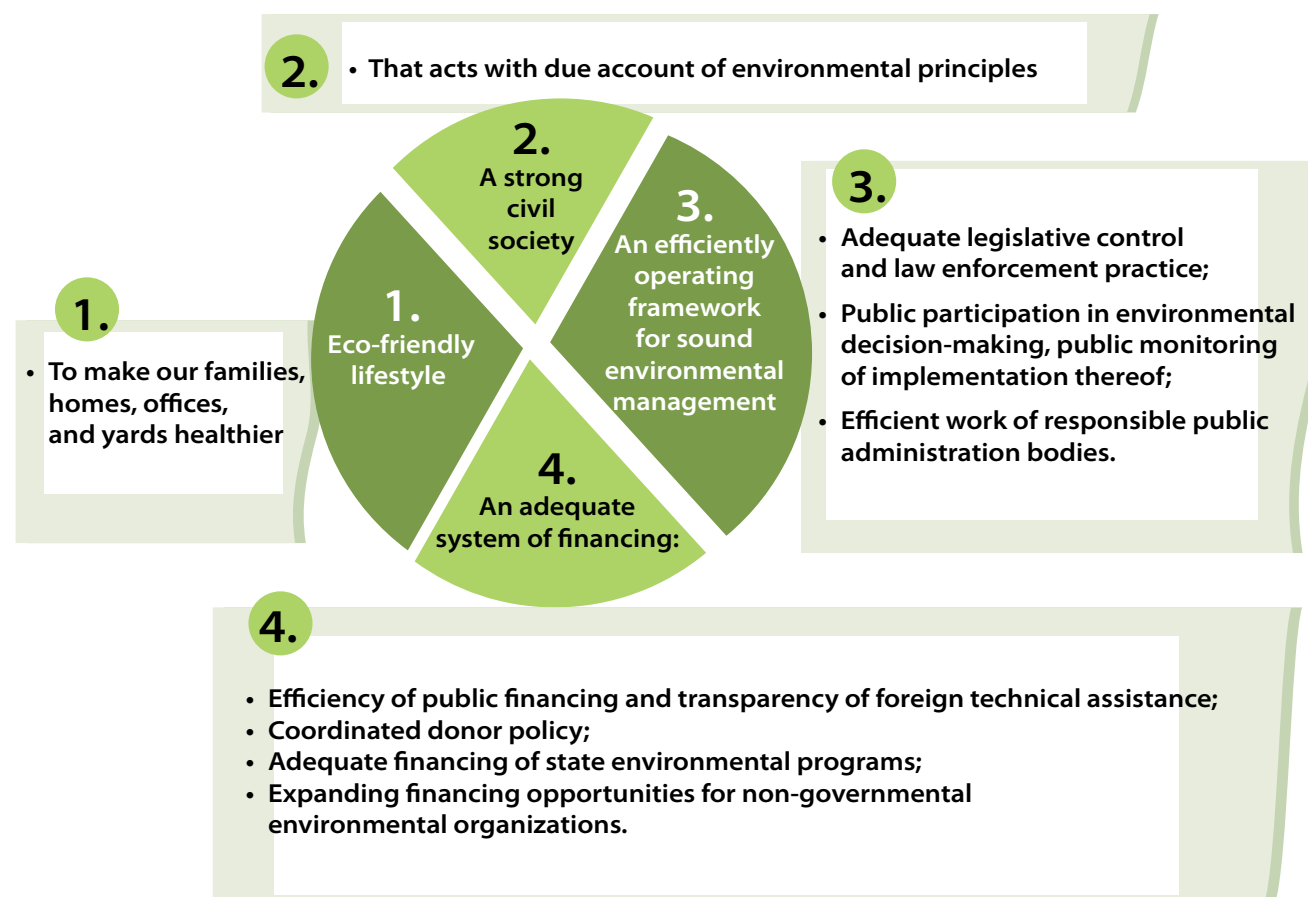




## STRATEGIC AREAS OF ACTIVITY OF GREEN NETWORK: WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The principles of sustainable development lay foundation for our activity. We build our plans, base our goals and initiate nature protection campaigns upon them.<sup>1</sup>

The principles of sustainable development are reflected in Green Network Development Strategy and include the following four pillars:



In our opinion, work in these four directions can promote real positive changes in the society with respect not only to environment, but also other areas of civil life.

<sup>1</sup> Sustainable development is the development of society with balanced approach to its social, economic, and environmental needs.







Tens of trees rescued, a mass clean up in a Minsk park, industrial climbers instead of woodcutters, and a 42-kilometer walk around the city – this and much more was offered to city dwellers by a brand new GN campaign “Urban Forester”.

The main aim of the campaign is to draw citizens’ attention to conservation of urban plantation, as well as promoting citizen activism through engagement to conservation of urban plantation.

The campaign announced itself first by standing up for 28 trees in the Gorky Park that the administration of Partizansky rayon of Minsk had planned to cut. By presenting experts’ findings at public hearings participants of the campaign managed to protect “blacklisted” trees and prove that their condition is not critical. As a result, a decision was taken to cut only 3 trees in the Gorky Park from the planned 28 and cure the rest.

When spring came, the Urban Forester decided to help Gorky Park and its staff with regular spring works. Thanks to active citizens and the call of Igor Korzun, coordinator of the campaign, 70 people gathered for a collective clean up in the Gorky Park. The clean up served a continuation of the unique dialog between Belarusian authorities and public.

An unexpected solution for conservation of old trees in the Gorky Park came from... industrial climbers from the “Forest Cutter” organization,



who volunteered to cut dry branches of old trees in the Gorky Park within one day. The campaign was unique in terms of the city, as nobody did this kind of tree surgery for high trees before, first of all, due to complexity and costliness of such operations. Up to that time, in most cases it had been easier to cut such trees down instead of trimming them.

The cost of further work of urban climbers in the park was covered by citizens of Minsk from their own pockets! Within a month the Urban Forester campaign collected 650 USD (in BYR equivalent), enough to trim and thus rescue 10 more wonderful trees for the park.

In order to introduce citizens to the heritage of the city parks and enhance their understanding of how the city functions, last autumn the Urban Forester invited Minsk natives to trace the “green” history of the city during two walking tours: a marathon along the water-and-plantation diameter and a tour along the Slepjanskaya water system. For both tours special routes were developed; they can be found on the website of the campaign, as well as many more interesting things about the city and its environment.

By the end of the year, the “Urban Forester” campaign had launched its official website, which features not only the latest news, but also an exciting online quest.

*“The tree made human beings human, and through tasting the fruit of knowledge we became able to consciously choose between Good and Evil”, - Igor Korzun, coordinator of the campaign.*

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Olya

“Protect Belarusian swamps” campaign works to protect 8 swamp conservation areas that became at risk of destruction. Campaign activists lobby cancellation of Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 794 on reorganizing these swamps for peat extraction, and develop a plan of conservation and sustainable development of these areas.

The steering committee of the campaign includes Belarus’ largest environmental organizations: “APB BirdLife Belarus”, “Ecohome”, “Bahna”, and “Center of Environmental Solutions”. At the moment activists are supported by 90 public associations and at least 19 000 citizens of our country.



Kostya

The campaign has four core areas of activity:

- Legal sphere – work with legislation;
- Scientific sphere - studying swamps and carrying out feasibility studies in concert with Belarusian and foreign scientists;
- Information sphere – disseminating information about the value and importance of Belarusian swamps as unique eco-systems;
- Cultural sphere – creating an attractive image of swamps.

Active support of scientists, volunteers, local citizens, and colleagues from other environmental organizations was the key factor of a number of campaign’s victories in 2014.

The year’s main outcome was the resolution on cancellation of peat



extraction in the Republican landscape reserve “Vygonoshanskoye”, “Veterovichskiy” reserve, and prospective water and swamp reserves “Yanka” (a reserve will be established in the territory of the swamp in 2015) and “Ozery”.

Another good news of this year was the resolution on establishment in 2016 of a reserve in the territory of Zhado swamp, which could well become another peat extraction site.

The decision regarding “Morochno”, “Unukhalskoye-1” and “Golubitskaya pusha” reserves will be negotiated in 2015, and the campaign team will keep a close eye on the future of these territories.

In 2014 the “Protect Belarusian swamps” campaign represented by its coordinator Olga Kaskevich joined the International Mire Conservation Group.<sup>2</sup>

In order to demonstrate the impact and role of swamps in the life of Belarusians, and how their disappearance will affect the environment, the campaign activists tried to make the “swamp” issue not only socially important, but also exciting. Thus, the “Protect Belarusian swamps”

<sup>2</sup> IMCG is a large international network of specialists and scientists from more than 60 countries. The main goal of the working group is development of the policy and legislation in the area of protection of water and swamp territories, thus giving Green Network a great opportunity for international cooperation in the area of protecting Belarusian swamps.





campaign brought a number of documentary films devoted to swamps to Belarus for the first time: Jan Haft's "Moor", 2012, and Jagna Knittel's "Olmany", 2012. Did the team manage to hook the public? Full halls during movie screenings spoke for themselves.

Young talented artists from Belarus did not stay on the sidewalk and jointly with the campaign team organized the first festival of art practices "Bahna" right in the swamp (Morochno). An exhibition of works by participants was an outcome of the festival: it featured installations and audio-visual experiments with account of "zero impact" principles. The unique viewpoint of artists on the topic of Belarusian swamps and unity of man and nature are presented here.

Throughout a year, the team worked actively to create a documentary movie "The Breath of Swamps". The film tells the story of swamps "blacklisted" for reclamation, of nearby territories and their inhabitants, who shared their stories of how their lives changed and how their native places died out because of peat extraction. *"During our trips we communicated a lot with local inhabitants, discussed their past and realized how it is intertwined with the swamp. Their occupation – picking cranberry – their lifestyle, their traditions are fading away, and, maybe, our children will not see them. They still go to the swamp to pick cranberry, sing songs,*



*communicate with the wildlife – we wanted to picture all that to have a chance to show it to others",* - Olga Kaskevich shares her impressions. The first run of the film took place in Minsk in December. The campaign team plan to show "The Breath of Swamps" in other towns of Belarus and hold a screening for local inhabitants "starring" in the film.

As they took measures to protect swamps located in specially protected natural areas, coordinators of the campaign got a clear vision of the fact the whole Belarusian system of management of such territories needs improvement. Therefore, the campaign resolved to transform its activity in 2015 expanding it to cover specially protected natural areas in general.

*"The swamp resembles human body in being as perfect and independent. And the way human body suffers from wounds, the swamp dies if one makes holes in it"* – **Hans Joosten**, head of the International Working Group for Swamp Conservation in an address to participants of the Congress held on July 25-26 in Berezinsky.

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Nastya

Climate change poses one of the greatest threats to the livelihood of today's humanity, and for Green Network this topic remains one of those topping the agenda. Goals of the Climatic campaign include reduction of impact on climate and adaptation to existing changes and those yet to come.

The campaign works on national and international level.

#### In Belarus

Work of the campaign at the national level includes interaction with government decisions and programs, professional engagement with scientists and experts on issues related to state climate policy, and monitoring of activity of public administration bodies and foreign technical assistance projects.

In 2014 the campaign's experts provided inputs regarding climate change to the Sixth National Report of the Republic of Belarus that were incorporated in the final version of the document. The report reflects climate change observed in Belarus, measures taken at the country level to reduce emission of greenhouse gas, and research in this area undertaken in the country that joined the UN Framework Convention on Climate change.

Furthermore, the campaign's activities also cover awareness raising, education, and introduction of everyday people to climate change issues through exciting public campaigns.

Two vivid examples of Green Network's annual climatic campaigns are the "Earth Hour" and "Climate, stay with us!" 2014 campaigns were marked with largest scale and gained support of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, as well as a number of other ministries and agencies. Numerous enterprises, organizations, and thousands of Belarusians turned off the light in their homes and offices to show responsibility for the Earth's future.

The annual campaign "Climate, stay with us!" has already become a tradition, and it brings together more and more people every year. Exchanging waste paper for fresh and edible vitamin bouquets, a photo stand depicting a fantastic, but nonetheless possible in future climatic catastrophe in Minsk, postcards with messages to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus with a call for due account of opinions of Belarusians in the course of preparation



to the UN climate change summit opened by Ban Ki-moon. Campaigns give a chance to raise important issues in an informal and entertaining manner and get participants of all ages interested.

#### At the international level

As climate change is a global challenge that can be addressed only through joint effort, international cooperation between civil society organizations is of great importance for work in this area. Green Network actively promotes climate change issues within the framework of the [Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum](#), and also plays the role of co-coordinator of activity of the international Climate Action Network in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region ([CAN EECCA](#)).

In 2014 the 2nd General Assembly of CAN EECCA was organized with participation of Green Network. At this conference, participants confirmed their public position for the upcoming international climate talks in Lima and Paris.



To make the climate change topic more understandable for the general public, participants of the climate change campaign hold workshops throughout the year on information work in the area of climate change for representatives of media agencies of the EECCA region, maintain Facebook pages and a Youtube channel (CAN EECCA), disseminate up-to-date information and findings of most recent topical research, offer reviews of outcomes of international climate agreements, and hold webinars on various topics for all comers.

Representatives of Green Network again acted as national experts for the annual Climate Change Performance Index study carried out by a German organization Germanwatch and CAN Europe that is aimed to perform comparative analysis of various aspects of climate policy in 58 world's leading countries in terms of their volumes of greenhouse gas emissions. Based on the performed research, Belarus was ranked 38 of 58 possible (the country went down by 10 rating positions within a year and showed a deterioration of policy and practice of combating climate change). On top of that, Green Network's Climate Campaign took part in an update of the European Integration Index featuring data on environmental protection, climate, and energy in Belarus. The main aim of this research is to track annual progress in Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Findings of the 2014 research will be made publicly available soon.

In December 2014, participants of the Climate campaign took part in the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Peru. In the course of the event, they shared the latest news and monitored work of official delegations of our region as representatives of the public. As negotiations over the new climate agreement were not in the limelight in countries of our region, this year CAN public observers awarded Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia with the "Fossil of the Day" award, which is traditionally given to countries who make the greatest negative contribution to the ongoing negotiations process.

*"When I retire, I would like to live somewhere on the sea shore and own a small hostel. So all I have to do now is live to see my pension and deal with climate change, so that my hostel does not get washed away", - Anastasiya Bekish, campaign coordinator.*

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Inessa

Pripyats Polesie is a unique natural area that during recent years has been widely utilized for business activity instead of being protected: hundred-year oak forests are cut down, birds and animals are hunted.

Work of the "Let's protect the Pripyats oak forests" is aimed at:

- Expanding the protected area of the "Pripyatsky" national park and restoring the protected status of oak forests and other rare trees;
- Ensuring access to information on activity of the "Pripyatsky" national park for general public;
- Monitoring the situation in the territory of "Pripyatsky" national park and implementation of the Management Plan thereof;
- Introducing amendments to the legislation of the Republic of Belarus regarding specially protected natural areas (SPNAs) for the purpose of its improvement.

Adoption of the Management Plan for "Pripyatsky" national park became an important event of 2014; participants of the campaign initiated discussion of the Management Plan. The Plan describes negative process that take place in the territory of the national park and endanger conservation of its natural complexes, and suggests measures to address some of them.

In order to design changes to zonation of the territory of "Pripyatsky" national park and improve mechanisms for public participation in park management, throughout the year the campaign held consultations, discussions, and interviews (32 in total) with specialists of public organizations and government agencies: the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Presidential Administration,



the Institute of Forest, the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Experimental Botany and others.

In the run up to the World Environment Day the campaign launched an online petition to collect signatures: "Stop destruction of nature in the "Pripyatsky" national park, which was signed by approximately 7 thousand people from all over Belarus. The online petition calls on the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus to revise zonation of the park, restore the protected status to flood plain oak trees, and increase the protected area by at least 50%.

In order to disseminate news of the campaign and updates on the situation in the "Pripyatsky" national park the campaign maintains a Facebook group «Let's save the Pripyats oak forests», where most up to date information on changes in the management system and general state of the park are published and discussed.

*"Pripyats oak forests form our unique Polesie landscape and are habitats of numerous rare species. Urgent measures must be taken to rescue them from the threat of cuts and destruction. However, I am sure that 2015 will become a turning point - for the better - with respect to conservation of environment of the Pripyatsky" national park", - Inessa Zenina, campaign coordinator .*

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Marina

Within a year of operation legal advisers of the Green Network's legal service held more than 100 consultations for citizens who came to them seeking assistance in addressing local environmental concerns. On top of that, the service backed initiatives and campaigns of Green Network on the legal side, took part in preparation of the reference book for the "Green watch" and the "Handbook for applying nature protection legislation for farm representatives".

To make environmental legislation work and ensure its efficient practical implementation, this year the service's legal advisers participated in discussion of draft amendments and additions to normative legal acts:

- Law "On Environmental Protection";
- Law "On Specially Protected Natural Areas";
- Forestry Code;
- Law "On State Environmental Review" and others.

What rights do we have in the area of environmental protection? How can we advocate for these rights? What is the actual jurisdiction for protection of environmental rights in Belarus? To help everyone find answers to these questions and to illustrate trends in judicial practice, Green Network's legal service prepared an overview of judicial practice for environmental legal cases with participation of citizens that were reviewed by courts of the Republic of Belarus between 2010 and 2014.

An important event marking 2014 was participation of Green Network's legal advisers in the 4th meeting of parties to the Aarhus Convention that took place in the Netherlands in summer. During this meeting, the European Union officially addressed Belarus urging it to follow all recommendations made because of non-compliance with the Convention in the course of construction of the Ostrovetskaya Atomic Power Station and Nemanskaya Hydropower Station under threat of issuance of a warning. Recommendations concerning Belarus specify



the necessity of further implementation of Aarhus Convention norms in the national legislation and adoption of a number of practical measures toward execution of the Convention.

Especially for this meeting the service's legal advisers prepared an overview of implementation of provisions of the convention in the Republic of Belarus between 2011 and 2014. The aim of this overview was to assess the degree to which citizens of the Republic of Belarus can access environmental information, and how they can participate in environmental decision-making. The overview also presents action-oriented proposals to improve practical implementation of the Convention in our country.

From November 2013 till April 2014 the legal service carried out a study of how citizens are informed about public hearings held on issues of environmental importance by local executive bodies through their websites.

*«Information on holding public hearings is the first and the most important step to open the door to public participation in environmental decision-making», - that is what **Marina Dubina**, coordinator of Green Network's legal service, is sure of.*

Further analysis of the monitoring showed that very often information regarding public hearings is missing on websites of executive committees, or that it is not provided in full. Authors of the monitoring went an extra mile to develop specific recommendations for executive committees to ensure that information about upcoming public hearings placed on websites becomes available to all interested citizens.

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Irina

The “Green watch” is a public environmental movement based on mutual assistance. The inspection aims to:

- Resolve the most specific environmental issues;
- Collect information on most frequently repeated breaches for subsequent analysis;
- Develop proposals for amending the existing legislation or law enforcement practice;
- Supervision of enforcement of environmental legislation.

Green Network’s legal advisers and the team of the “Green watch” inspection “translated” the mind-bending language of laws into clear algorithms and made up the “Green watch” reference book. It includes 45 simple step-by-step guides to resolving environmental issues independently: what to do if you witnessed animal abuse, if trees are cut down in your yard, if someone is burning waste, or if you want a bicycle parking to appear nearby – this and many more can be found on the pages of the reference book.

If a person manages to resolve three environmental issues independently with the help of the developed algorithms, they can join the “watchers’ network”. At the moment the movement has 24 “green watchers”, who keep an eye on enforcement of environmental laws and try to resolve issues independently, and 56 people more, who took steps to resolve environmental issues with the help of developed algorithms.

So, what makes a “watcher” different from other activists? A “green watcher” can take part in learning events, gets a certificate and a badge of a participant of a public movement, and can resort to green legal advisers. The “watchers” have their own personal Internet accounts which makes it comfortable to store information and easy to exchange it with fellow “watchers”.



And now some figures: Starting May 2014 the following work was done thanks to the “Green watch” initiative:

-  Issued 1340 written notices to those parking in green areas
-  Issued 634 written notices to owners of domestic animals regarding removal of their excrements
-  Lodged 19 complaints regarding untimely removal of waste
-  Prevented 29 cases of dumping outside specialized sites
-  13 dumps were eliminated
-  Prevented 5 cases of animal cruelty
-  Prevented 3 cases of fishing in an illegal manner
-  4 times promptly informed state inspections of fish dying in water reservoirs
-  6 written addresses regarding breach of borders of protected water zones
-  Prevented 7 cases of prevention of planting cuts in the yards of residential areas
-  Prevented 5 cases of planting cuts in forest territories and on roadsides
-  Prevented 7 cases of dry planting burns
-  Issued 39 addresses regarding lowering kerbs – in 23 cases the kerbs were lowered

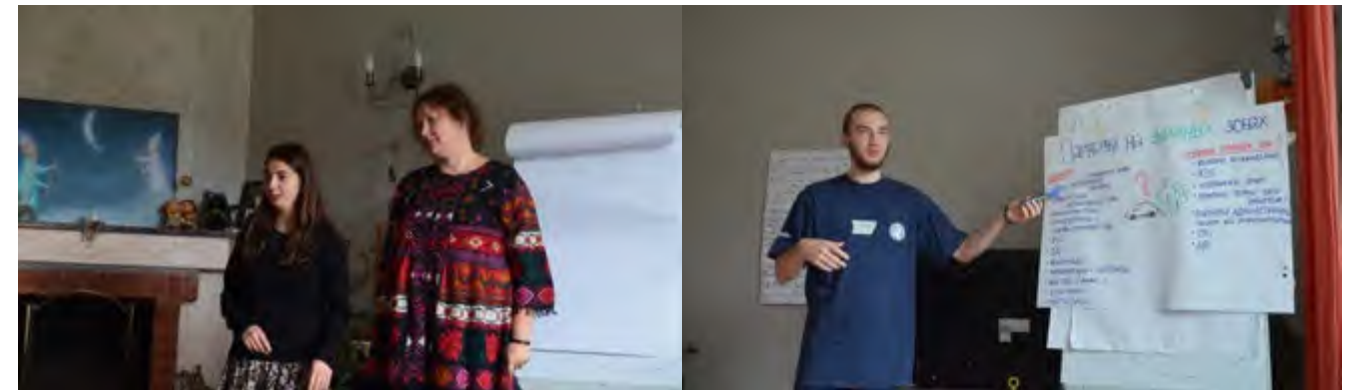
*“The Green watch” public environmental inspection was established to jointly take care of the world we live in. We try to prevent new environmental problems from occurring and help each other in resolving the existing ones”, - Irina Belaya, campaign coordinator .*

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«Зеленый дозор» (FB page)





It is no secret that so far Belarus has few activists who can work with environmental issues, are aware of their environmental rights, and know how to protect them, using legal mechanisms. To remedy this situation, the legal service of Green Network invites senior students of legal departments to be trained in a specially organized School of Environmental Legal Advisers, as well as practice in the legal service of Green Network.

The School of Environmental Legal Advisers is a program for those 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 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.

Following graduation from the school, three new legal advisers joined Green Network, who got into the gear of the legal service at once.

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## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



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.

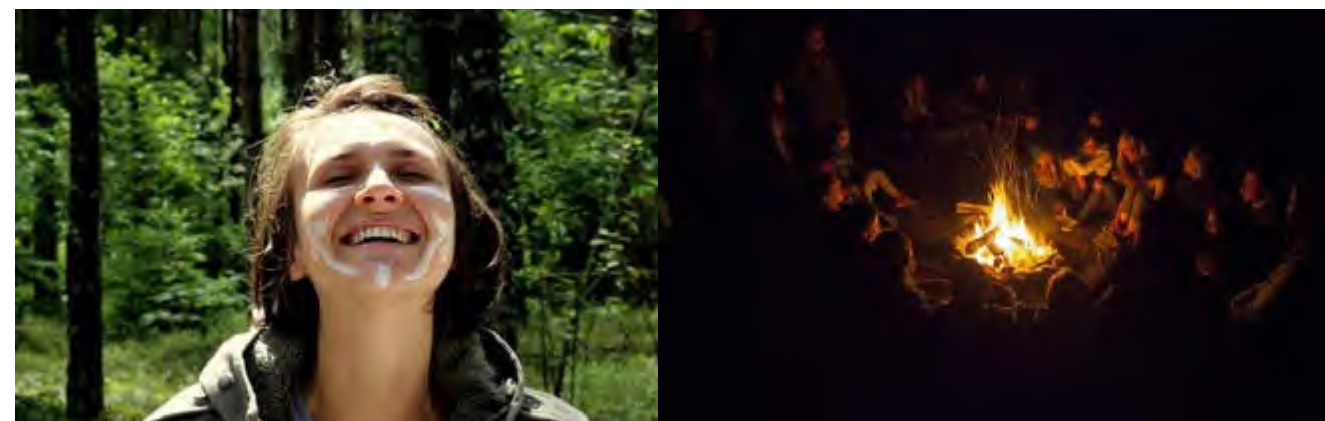
The school is aimed to strengthen the Belarusian environmental movement through engaging new people, who know major environmental problems, understand their right to a healthy environment, and are able to show citizen activism.

*«In addition to the enormous volumes of really useful information delivered at these learning sessions, they gave me an opportunity to meet people inspired by what they do and tune into the beat of their enthusiasm. Take me: I never tried to make a difference between bird's voices, knew nothing of the ways to hide illegal logging sites, and had no experience with creating environmental projects. I hope I will have a chance to apply the knowledge I received and implement my brewing ideas», - **Sasha Kurochkina**, SYEL graduate (2014).*

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

During the two-day training of the first level, participants are introduced to basic principles of ecology and eco-friendly lifestyle. The second level workshop is an exciting intensive practical course, which takes place in the beautiful, almost wild places away from the city. Here the participants get acquainted with representatives of environmental organizations from Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, learn project management, and also participate in a session on deep ecology, which gives them an opportunity to get closer to understanding themselves and their place in nature. Here young activists begin to develop their own ideas of environmental start-ups and form a team.

## THE SCHOOL OF YOUNG ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS



At the final school stage, the newly minted activists work independently on implementation of their own projects. To make them feel sure of the outcome experienced teachers-experts assist them.

This year's SYEL graduates have already successfully implemented their eco-projects: a "green office" was created in one of the office buildings in Minsk, «eco-workshops for children» are developing actively offering kids exciting environmental lessons through games and creativity, an Environmental Activist's handbook has been published, where SEA's most important educational materials are collected for potential SYEL participants, and a project for dissemination of important environmental information through bulletin boards in hallways «Social Network. LIVE».

In 2014, on the first level of the school was attended by 80 students, and following submission of cover letters, only 20 most promising candidates got to the second level.

After graduating from SYEL in 2014 the newly minted graduates prepare their projects, including «EkoDvorik», «Bike crossing», «Urban garden», «Vegans' and vegetarians' club», «Eco Office», «Slow Glow». Actual implementation of the projects will start in 2015.

Beginning this year, SYEL was conducted in regions for the first time; Grodno was first.

In order to create a kind of a networking platform for SYEL graduates, to enable them to share experience and work in cooperation, this year the SYEL club was created. The Club hosts various lectures, topical movie screenings, and just lively meetings of SEA's graduates from previous years.

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## GREEN NETWORK IN GRODNO AND GOMEL



Julia

The green movement will never become powerful and forceful if it stays concentrated in Minsk only. That is why we continue strengthening the potential of regional branches.

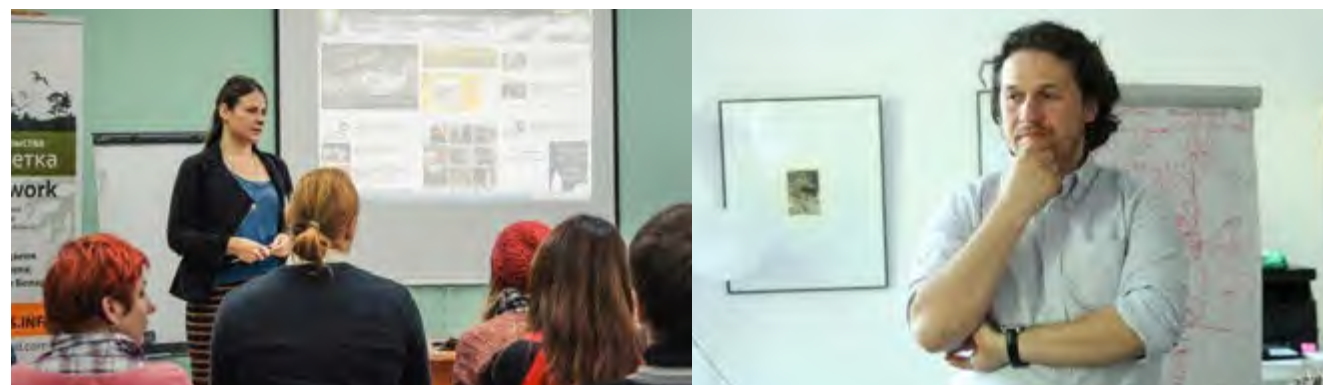
The aim of Green Network's activity in Grodno and Gomel regions is providing support to the regional green movement united on a networking principle.

This autumn Grodno hosted the first "Green Forum" where environmental organizations and initiatives of the region discussed all the most pressing problems of the city and presented significant environmental campaigns and initiatives. Summarizing the results of the Forum, participants made a "map" of environmental problems of the city and the region, as well as introduced the organization and activists for further cooperation.

Speaking of cooperation, throughout the year environmental activities in Grodno together with activists from the Green Network were joined by different environmental organizations and initiatives of the region: public association "VeloGrodno", the Grodno branch of "APB", Public Association "Third Sector Center", Public Association "Grodno Fishing Club", Grodno regional public association of young scientists "VIT".

This year Grodno did not remain on the sidelines of the annual environmental actions: "Earth Hour", "Mobility Week", campaign for the global cleaning "Let's do it!", "A week without plastic", contests for the best environmental photo, environmental lectures and workshops - with each new action, more and more interested and caring citizens of Grodno join the organizers.

In winter, the city hosted the first New Year Free Market (Free Fair), which was attended by more than 100 citizens of Grodno who came to exchange things and participate in workshops. Free Markets are



## GREEN NETWORK'S ACTIVITY IN GRODNO



just steps toward interaction between society and environment. Free exchange of things reduces the need to produce and to buy new ones and helps find the use of "old-fashioned" stuff.

This year, the school of young environmental leaders took place in Grodno for the first time took. It is there that participants get acquainted with the green movement in Belarus, can undergo training in public associations of Belarus, as well as try their hand at their own eco-projects.

An important event of the year was the creation of the "Green Portal of Grodno Region." Launch of the Portal gave citizens of Grodno an opportunity to discuss issues related to the environment of the region and to find possible solutions on the same site.

Today the "Green Portal of Grodno Region" features:

- Environmental news of the Grodno region;
- Practical tips on making life more eco-friendly;
- How to preserve living nature in your own yard, town, village;
- How to stand up for your right to clean air, clean water, green yard with the help of legislation;
- The latest news about the activity of Grodno environmental organizations;
- Announcements of upcoming events.

*"However bad industrial and agricultural pollution is, however great is the volume of forests cut down by corporations, planet Earth will not vanish from the universe, and Nature, though polluted and tortured, will stay with us. It will take other forms. But will there be a place for a Man, healthy and happy, in such a world?" – Julia Koleda, Green Network coordinator, Grodno.*

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Anna

In order to give new impetus to the environmental movement in the region and to unite those concerned with environmental problems, in summer Gomel hosted the first «Green Forum». Will Green Gomel come to life? What issues are of higher priority and can bring people together? What will the green movement in Gomel region look like? – the Regional Development Center GDF, Regional Public Association “Gomel Association of Children and Youth” (ASDEMO), the «New Gomel” campaign, the Velo-Gomel community, as well as a number of the city’s activists joined the discussion of these issues in the framework of the Forum.

Participants of the Forum did not only conclude that nobody can solve environmental problems of the city, district, and of course the whole area, alone, but also discussed the possibility of joint action. As a result of the discussion, participants developed a common vision for development of the green movement in the Gomel region and agreed on the objectives and methods of work.

In autumn the «International Mobility Week» and «Car Free Day», meetings with Minsk and Grodno organizers of street festivals, monitoring of yards and parking in green areas, and competitions for schoolchildren were successfully held in Gomel. Moreover, in the winter the first “Free Market” (Free Fair) took place, where more than 100 people came to exchange things. More information can be found here.

With regard to the important plans for the near future for Green Network, it is primarily the creation of a professional editor’s office for green news and the «Green Portal of Gomel Region.» The portal will feature the most up to date news about environmental activity in the region, upcoming environmental events, highlight the work of environmental organizations in the region, and advice from lawyers and experts.



After seeing the first results of the collaboration, the initiative group of Gomel ecologists plans to work actively in 2015. Follow the news!

*«It is extremely exciting to watch the green movement in Gomel develop, especially taking into account the “environmental past” of the region that saw the Chernobyl disaster. Every month more and more active and interested people join us. Although at the moment the movement is only gaining speed – in the future nothing will stop this gear”, Anna Dapshevichute, Green Network coordinator for Gomel.*

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## ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

City- and nation-wide information campaigns are a chance to present complicated environmental topics, such as climate change, conservation of swamps, green consumption etc., to general public in a clear, vivid, and motivating way.

“Earth Hour”, “Mobility Week”, clean-up campaign “Let’s do it!”, “Earth Day”, “Eco-Style Weekend”, “Climate, stay with us!”, “School Free Market”, “Plastic Free Week”, “Children’s Festival in Grushevka”, environmental movie screenings and lectures, “Summer in the Balcony” and “Minsk’s Most Mobile Company” competitions – these and many more actions make Green Network familiar to people. Particularly in 2014 we managed



to find formats of participation in actions that are eagerly supported by Belarusians and enjoy broad media coverage.

Interestingly, each member organization of the alliance brings its own ideas to holding actions and engages active regional volunteers in organizing and holding them, thus turning such actions into memorable events for the city!

### «Earth Hour»

In 2014, Green Network for the sixth time became the initiator of the

## ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

global WWF campaign «Earth Hour» in Belarus. The essence of the action is to turn off unnecessary lights and electrical appliances at home or in the office and disable decorative lighting of buildings for one hour from 20.30 to 21.30 on the last Saturday of March, thus making the preservation of natural resources a constant habit.

Disabling lighting of the Nezavisimosti avenue and Pobedy avenue, the lights of the National Library, lightning of a number of ministries, shopping centers, cafes in central Minsk, an acoustic concert by candlelight in the «Hooligan» bar, street fire shows – that is how the «Earth Hour» was celebrated in Minsk and other cities.



*«We joined that noble action, as we view it as opposition to consumer attitude to the world and nature. This hour will be noted by many people», - Leonid Pavlenok, frontman of the “Nagual” band*

### “Mobility Week” and «Car Free Day»

This week the Mobility Week was held under the slogan “Our streets – our choice” and was aimed at resolving urban environmental problems with the powers of citizens. Organizers of the “Mobility Week” invited citizens to avoid using cars wherever possible to demonstrate care of the city and its environment.



Workshops covering livable urban infrastructure from local and international experts, lectures, discussions, the “Green Phone” hotline, topical movie night, bicycle rides, mobility competitions for most bicycle-friendly businesses and the first stroll marathon along the city – this year the action was held in Minsk, Brest, Gomel, Grodno, Baranovichy, and became most eventful in its own history in Belarus.



#### “Plastic Free Week”

A small plastic bag, in which caring salespersons put vegetables or toothpaste for us, a beverage bottle, plastic wrapping for oranges from supermarkets - all that will decompose only in 100 - 200 years. We bring all this home every night and it is the first thing that eventually goes into the rubbish bin, and then to the dump. As a result, we risk leaving eternal mounds in our memory, but not of glory, but of shame - monuments to our own irresponsibility towards the fragile environment that gives us life.

Member organizations of Green Network offer Belarusians at least a week to conclude an intriguing bet with ourselves: to abandon the use and purchase of new plastic and observe how it affects our everyday life. During the “Plastic Free Week” a practical experiment was held: people went to hypermarkets in Minsk and Grodno with the usual list of

products for dinner, and they were not allowed to bring home from the supermarket anything having plastic. As a result, we managed to find out whether Minsk hypermarkets provide an alternative to plastic bags and make up a respective rating. The result of the experiment can be found on the website.



We invited all those willing to join the action to maintain a “plastic-free consumer’s logbook” throughout the week.

*“I realized that there’s lots of plastic around, but not that much!” – Olga Shestakova, participant of the action, shares her opinion.*

In addition to that, Green Network prepared a range of information materials that became “life hacks” for those who care about their environmental footprint.

Contact us:  
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Belarusian 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.

In 2014 the Belarusian green portal changed its layout and now offers its visitors a user-friendly structure, where everyone can find actual environmental information:

- Eco-friendly lifestyle – a section on how to make your everyday life and work more eco-friendly;
- Society – news of Belarusian environmental public associations;
- Politics – review of national legislation, actual solutions in the field of environmental protection;
- Economics – materials on financing for environmental activities at the government, public, and international level;
- A calendar of environmental events, announcements, actual petitions and many more.

To enhance knowledge and professional skills of journalists covering environmental topics, at the beginning of the year the editor's office of the Belarusian green portal held a 2-month training course for all comers on environmental journalism "Proper coverage of environmental issues". As a result of the training new young journalists joined the Portal's team.

Contact us:

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In 2015 Green Network will continue its work in Belarus and on the international level. We invite all those interested to join the existing campaigns, information and educational activities. We intend to put more efforts to help our friends and colleagues from environmental organizations and initiatives in Grodno, Gomel, and Brest, plan to expand the scope of conservation and monitoring activities in specially protected natural areas. Finally, we will take stock of our two years' work at the Forum of Environmental NGOs in 2015 – the largest environmental event held once in 2 years.

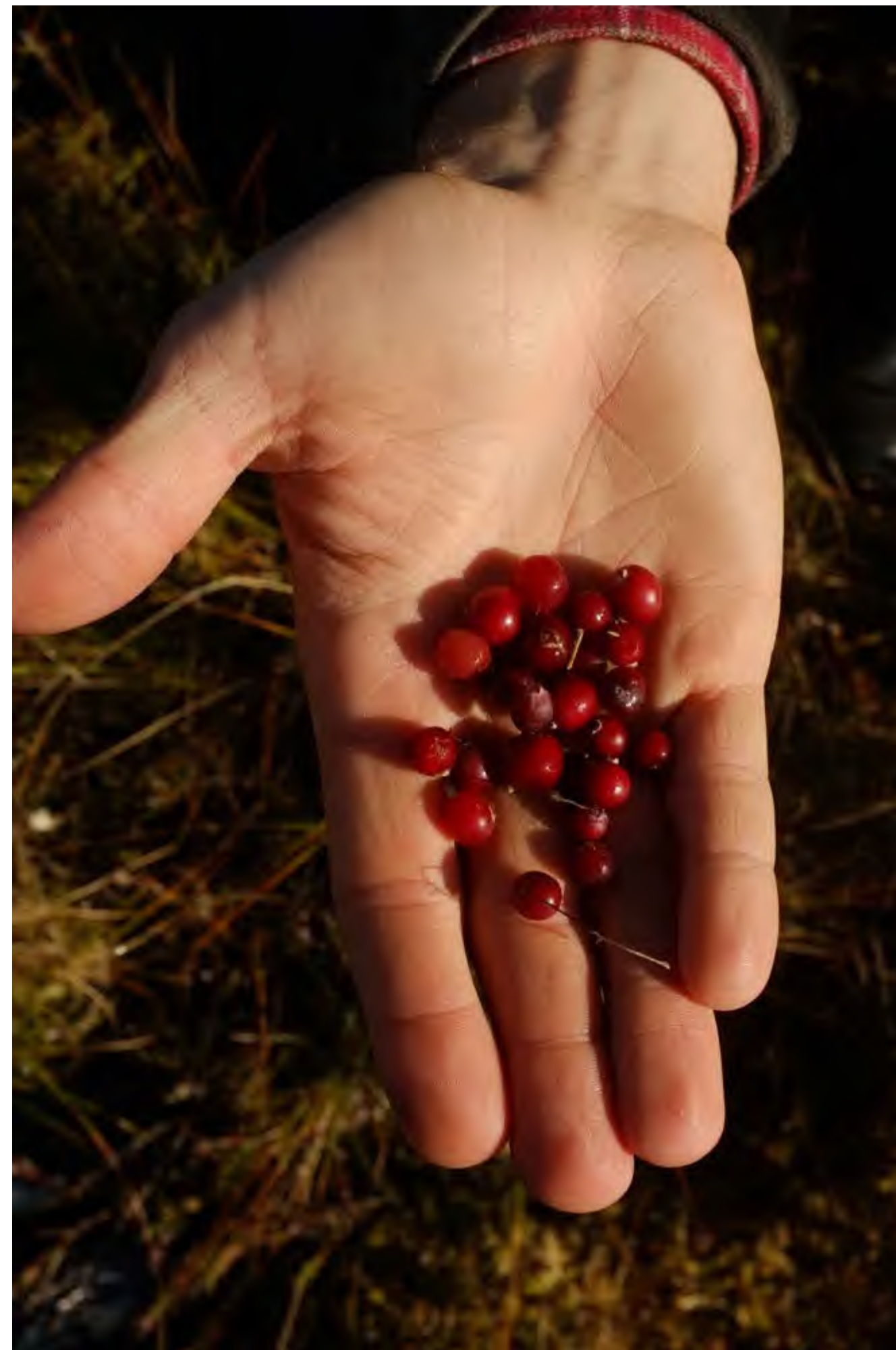
We seek partners at all tiers of modern society. Our goal is to take the Belarusian green movement beyond NGOs and establish broader cooperation with representatives of business, public administration, culture and academia, independent trade unions and religious communities, to jointly build a society based on respect for nature, human rights, economic fairness, and global culture.

**Participation in Green Network's activities gives you the following opportunities:**

- You will receive first-hand up-to-date information about important environmental developments in Belarus and worldwide, educational events, and announcements of topical grant programs;
- You will be able to participate in planning and implementation of Green Network's activities, initiate and implement environmental projects and campaigns;
- You will have a chance to exchange valuable experience and engage new motivated people into your activity;
- You will have access to expert support;
- You will be substantially involved in formation of Belarusian civil society and development of national environmental policy.

And, most importantly, by joining the Belarusian green movement, of which Green Network is an active part, you will have a chance to successfully deal with issues that you cannot manage with your own powers.

If you wish to cooperate with Green Network, please, contact us at [pressgreenbel@gmail.com](mailto:pressgreenbel@gmail.com)





To better understand why and how Belarusian mass media cover environmental issues and activity of environmental organizations in our country, in 2014 we launched a research **“Environment as Reflected in Mass Media”** (prepared by the Center for European Transformation).

Based on research findings, Belarusian media do not deny the importance of environmental issues, however, publications related to environmental protection are far from topping the editor's and, subsequently, the reader's agenda. Nevertheless, green activists view the media as partners in shifting the society away from environmental indifference.

Authors of the research recommend that environmentalists and journalists have more joint discussions of how to promote topics of social importance that are not marked as vital in Belarusians' perception; how to make environment-related topics clear to mass readers; how to attract attention to them to push the society to resolve these issues and encourage government to give more attention to them; how to increase our common social accountability in these areas.

Looking back at 2014, we note that activity of the Green Network's organizations was not kept in shadow, which means that promotion of environmental topics in our country has all chances to move from special sections to “main news”.



### Media coverage of our activity in 2014:

- Telegraf.by News Agency
- “Magazine” Analytical Resource
- Belarusian Information Company “Belapan”
- Belarusian News Service “Belnovosti” (BelNews) Belarusian Portal TUT.by.
- Belarus Telegraph Agency “Belta”
- “Minskaya Prada” Newspaper
- “Argumenty I Fakty” Newspaper
- “Brestskiy Kurier” Newspaper
- “Komsomolskaya Pravda” Newspaper
- “Maladchenskaya Gazeta” Newspaper
- “Narodnaya Volya” Newspaper
- “Nasha Niva” Newspaper
- “Respublika” Newspaper
- “Sovetskaya Belorussiya” Newspaper
- “Govorim.by” City Portals
- “Where Minsk” City Online Magazine
- “Garden Design” Magazine
- “34 mag.net” Magazine
- “CityDog.info” Magazine
- “KyKy.org” Magazine
- “YoLife” Magazine
- “Naviny.by. Belarusian News” Internet Newspaper
- “Belarusian Reporter” Internet Newspaper
- “Alternative Youth Platform” Internet Platform
- “Strong News” Internet Resotce
- “New Europe” Information and Analytics Internet Magazine
- “Ecopress” Information Agency
- “Interfax-West” (Interfax.by) Information Agency
- “Minsk-News” Information Agency
- “Kraj. By” Information and News Portal
- ChatOff.by Information and Entertainment Portal
- “Wildlife Belarus” Information Portal
- “Dayplanner” Information Portal
- “Zautra.by” Information Portal



- “Charter 97” Information Portal
- “Architecture and Construction” Information Portal
- “My Brest” Information Portal
- “EuroBelarus.info” Information Resource
- “Onliner.by” Information Resource
- “Euroradio” Multimedia Project
- “Narodnaya Gazeta” National Social and Political Publication
- “Intex - Press.by” News Portal
- “Kariera.by” Educational Portal
- “Adukacija.info” Educational Portal
- NGO.by
- Relax.by
- “Evening Gomel” Regional Newspaper
- “Evening Grodno” Regional Newspaper
- “The Brest Newspaper” Regional Daily Newspaper
- “Evening Brest” Regional Portal
- “Belarus Partizan” Website
- Press Release.by
- “Regiony.by” Network of Internet Portals

### Television Channels:

- Belsat TV
- Belarus 1
- Minsk 24 DOK
- International Broadcasting Company “Mir”
- ONT
- STV

### Radio stations:

- “Culture” channel of the Belarusian Radio
- The First National Channel of the Belarusian Radio
- The Minsk Wave
- Stolitsa
- Russian Radio





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Yaroslav

Green Network thanks all those who were by our side, helped us, and supported us in the challenging 2014 – our colleagues, partners, volunteers and friends. We hope you will stay with us in 2015 on the way to a sustainable green Belarus!

**We thank our partners and colleagues: public administration and non-governmental organizations, business companies, initiatives, and international experts:**

- AirClim
- CAN EECCA
- Danish Outdoor Council
- Forum Syd
- Administration of the Central Children's Park named after M. Gorkiy
- The Assembly of NGOs
- Orgconsulting Marketplace
- "Center for Regional Development under the Gomel Democratic Forum" Establishment
- Management of the "Ozery" Reserve
- European EcoForum
- "Mova Nanova" Belarusian Language Classes
- Flying University
- The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG)
- 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
- Moldovan Association "Eco-Contact"
- National Academy of Science of the Republic of Belarus
- Non-Governmental Agency "Center of Environmental Solutions"
- Friends of the Earth Norway (Naturvernforbundet)
- OJSC "Solution Spark"
- Non-Government Organization "APB BirdLife Belarus"
- Non-governmental organization "Centre for informational support of public initiatives "The Third sector", Hrodna, Belarus
- Belarus Aarhus Center
- "Lesorub" Enterprise (industrial climbers)
- Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)
- Advertising Agency "Publicis Hepta Group"

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- "Society and Environment" Analytics and Resource Center, Ukraine
- "Environmental Research Bureau", Ukraine
- "Golden Age University" Program
- "Pontis" Fund
- "Interaction" Fund
- Center for European Transformation
- Center for Legal Transformation "Lawtrend"
- Czech Non-Governmental Organization "Civic Belarus"
- Environmental Establishment "Agro-Eco-Culture"
- Kazakhstan Ecoforum
- Youth Education Center "Fialta"

**Personal thanks to:**

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- Oleg Andros ("Nature Comes First")
- Andrey Andrusevich (Resource and Analytics Center "Society and Environment")
- Vladislav Velichko (International Consortium "EuroBelarus")
- Sergey Gotin (IMACON consulting group)
- Angelina Davydova (Kommersant)
- Andrey Yegorov (Center for European Transformation)
- Olga Zakharova (Belarus Aarhus Center)
- Alexander Kozulin (the National Academy of Science of Belarus)
- Alexey Kokorin (WWF Russia)
- Alexander Korolevich (NGO "Education Center POST")
- Kirill Kudravetc (Minsk Cycling Community)
- Alexander Lyampert (trainer, consultant)
- Vladimir Matskevich (International Consortium "EuroBelarus")
- Dmitry Morozik (SPE of the National Landscape Reserve "Ozery")
- Andrey Ozharovsky (Bellona)
- Rikke Damm (Danish Outdoor Council)
- Dmitry Savelov (Change.org)
- Olga Smolyanko (Center for Legal Transformation "Lawtrend")
- Oleg Sozinov (Grodno State University)
- Ivan Sukhy (LLS "Odisseya-2012", Russia)



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- Vladzimir Tsalko (Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, 2009-2014)
- Oleg Cherpa (the Central-European University, University of Lund)
- Vladimir Chuprov (Greenpeace, Russia)

... and all volunteers who helped us this year!

**We thank cultural and educational platforms and cafes for supporting our events:**

- Art-cafe “Beetlejuice”
- Creative Space “CEH”
- Central Scientific Library named after Yakub Kolas under the National Academy of Science of the Republic of Belarus
- AntiCafe “Dom Fishera”
- Youth Education Center “Fialta”
- “Hooligan” Bar
- “Imaguru” Business Club
- “Zerno” Cafe
- Contemporary Art Gallery «Ÿ»





**1. Public Association "Ecohome"**

One of Belarus' leading environmental civil society organizations. "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](mailto:ecohome.by@gmail.com);  
[ecohome-ngo.by](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:asdemo@gmail.com)  
[asdemo.org](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:office@nerush.org)  
[nerush.org](http://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](mailto:info@bike.org.by)  
[bike.org.by](http://bike.org.by)

**7. Public Association "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 cycling culture.

E-mail: [julia.koleda@gmail.com](mailto:julia.koleda@gmail.com)  
[velogrodno.by](http://velogrodno.by)

**8. Public Association "Bahna"**

The goal of "Bahna" Public Association is promotion of sustainable development ideas, environmental protection, and ensuring the citizens' right to a healthy environment.

E-mail: [bahna.land@gmail.com](mailto:bahna.land@gmail.com)  
[bahna.land](http://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](mailto:eko.yaselda@mail.ru)

**10. Public Association "Belarusian Committee "Chernobyl Children"**

Members of the organization join efforts 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](mailto: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](mailto:office@partnership.by)  
[partnership.by](http://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](mailto:ella_i@mail.ru)

**Individual members:**

13. Anastasiya Bekish
14. Yaroslav Bekish
15. Dmitriy Burenkin
16. Yevgeniy Belskiy
17. Victor Yermolenkov
18. Alesya Yefimova
19. Georgiy Kozulko
20. Yuliya Koleda
21. Olga Kremleva
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23. Yevgeniy Lobanov
24. Inna Panchkovskaya
25. Igor Pastukhov
26. Andrey Pakhomenko
27. Nataliya Porechina
28. Nina Polutskaya
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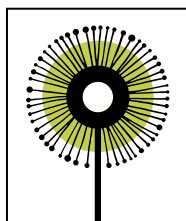
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