

GREEN LIGHT FOR A GREENER FUTURE: THE RISE OF THE GREEN ECONOMY IN BELARUS

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It has been a while since the world has been facing global environmental changes. Rising average temperatures, increasing frequency of extreme weather conditions and depletion of natural resources are creating new challenges for businesses and governments. For example, climate changes are leading to lower agricultural yields affecting food imports and exports. Air and water pollution are increasing healthcare costs. Therefore, there has emerged a need for a newer economic model that not only supports economic growth but also preserves natural resources for the future. This is how the concept of the green economy was introduced - a system that prioritizes eco-friendly technology, renewable energy sources and reduced harmful emissions. But how realistic is it for Belarus to adapt to this new conditions and is there a future for such economic model?

At the global level, the concept of the green economy is actively being implemented in countries such as China, the United States, most European countries. For instance, the EU adopted the “European Green Deal,” a strategy aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 [1]. Belarus is also taking steps in this direction.

Provisions related to this topic are reflected in a number of regulatory legal acts, including the Program of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021–2025 and the National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Republic of Belarus until 2035. In December 2021, the Government approved the National Action Plan for the Development of the Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus for 2021–2025. Taking into account economic conditions, future prospects, feasibility, and international obligations, there have been identified main directions for the development of the green economy in the country: implementation of sustainable consumption and production principles, expansion of organic production, promotion of ecological tourism, development of electric transport (infrastructure) and urban mobility, advancement of green finance, education, personnel training, and public engagement, scientific support for the transition to a green economy [2].

Some positive changes can already be noted. One of the biggest achievements is the increase of personal and public electric transport within the overall urban transportation system. The system of shared

mobility — including electric cars, bicycles, scooters, and other means of transport — has seen significant development, especially in Minsk and regional cities. Additionally, the construction of combined bicycle and pedestrian lanes has become widespread. Innovations are also evident in the construction sector, where the focus in multi-apartment housing projects is placed on energy-saving solutions and smart home technologies. Since 2020, all new apartment buildings in Belarus have been designed according to energy-efficient standards [3]. There was also built one of the largest solar power plants in the country in the Brahlin District with a capacity of 22 MW. A wind farm is in operation in Novogrudok. Nevertheless, the share of renewable energy sources in the national energy balance remains relatively low — around 6% [4]. Modern waste sorting facilities operate in several cities. Organic farming is developing through small-scale, environmentally oriented farms. Eco-tourism routes to national parks and protected natural areas — such as Belovezhskaya Pushcha and the Narach region — are gaining popularity.

With all that it may seem that there is a big future ahead for the green economy in Belarus. Despite these positive trends, there are several obstacles that make the development challenging. Environmental projects require substantial investment, and many green technologies remain expensive, while both the government and private sector lack sufficient funding. For example, the implementation of solar panel systems remains costly due to the dependence on imported technologies. Moreover, the Belarusian economy remains heavily reliant on traditional industries such as heavy manufacturing, mechanical engineering and petrochemicals, where ecological modernization requires major structural reforms, which is hard and costly to do. The culture of sustainable consumption, as well as the willingness to invest in green technologies, is still underdeveloped among both the population and the business sector.

Nevertheless, Belarus holds considerable potential for the development of a green economy. How can it be revealed? Since the main problem is insufficient funding, participation in international environmental initiatives, such as programs by the UNDP and the Global Environment Facility, can enable the country to attract funding and implement advanced technologies. Many projects were previously carried out with funding from the European Union. Now more attention is paid to cooperation with the CIS and EAEU countries, as well as China. The introduction of green finance mechanisms and the development of environmental entrepreneurship can promote sustainable growth. It includes green bonds, tax incentives and subsidies for eco-friendly businesses. Also, Belarus can expand its use of renewable energy sources, particularly solar and wind power, which remain underutilized despite the country's natural and technical potential. Supporting local production of green technologies could reduce dependence on imported equipment and lower implementation costs. Environmental education, the training of qualified specialists, and the increase of public awareness also can play a crucial role in supporting the green transition.

At its core, the green economy is not only an environmental necessity but also a potential driver of sustainable economic growth. Belarus is already taking important steps in this direction; however, a full transition requires systemic measures — from government support and financing to a shift in public awareness. The greening of the economy can contribute both to global environmental efforts and to enhancing the country's competitiveness in the future.

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