

Aleg Sivagrakau

**LOCAL AGENDA 21
IN BELARUS:**

FROM THEORY TO IMPLEMENTATION

1992–2006

Minsk

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Local Agenda 21 in Belarus: From Theory to Implementation
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This book is dedicated to sustainable development issues at the local level – in regions, districts, cities and villages. The main principles, means and mechanisms of establishing sustainable development strategies for territories (Local Agenda 21) are described in the book. Legislative and other institutional bases of LA21 development are analysed. The information on local initiatives in the field of sustainable development in Belarus during the period 1999–2006 are looked at and analysed. The book is aimed at all advocates of the concept of sustainable development: to workers of municipalities and members of local Councils, representatives of public organisations and foundations, experts, teachers and students and all other people who have an active interest in the development of their own “small homeland”. The book will be of interest to foreign experts, diplomats and representatives of international organisations working with Belarus.

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EDITORIAL

Sustainable development is viewed as one of the most pressing management dilemmas of the twenty-first century and leads to the need of examining effective approaches to economic growth and development which are more systemic.

From the end of World War II the world's richest nations, who at the time were trying to get their economies back in order, focused on 'development' as an economic phenomenon. In the more recent past the environmental element of sustainable development became more recognised to the extent that now some environmental campaigners say that the social, economic and institutional elements are muddling or diluting the main issue of the environment. Possibly as a consequence of this ongoing push by various actors to use the sustainable development argument to promote their cause – whether it is environmental, political, human rights or economic – local issues have not always received the attention of the larger national and international aspects of the sustainable development agenda. However, the local issues such as quality of life and the effects of the bigger picture events on local areas are integrally linked to national and international environment and economic development particularly because the global opportunities for prosperity, quality of life and knowledge will not be available for an ever-increasing human population due to the risks concerning the stability of the environment. The magnitude of risks is, therefore, a threat to collective sustainability, leading to demands for greater transparency regarding economic, environmental and social impacts at all levels.

Sustainability and the issues involved in sustainable development have been debated for centuries. The philosophers of the Victorian era not only set the scene for sustainable development and many of the values that it involves but also the wider economic and environmental debates. But starting in the more recent history there has been an evolving journey towards sustainable development.

During the 1960's we were seeing huge technological advances as well as seeing the environmental lobby picking up pace. The Cold War was at its height and man first stepped on the moon. National governments were looking at issues of poverty, population growth and social welfare in general given this context at that time. Economists in the West were still very much following the thought processes of capitalism, focusing on economic development however, there were contrary views being explored questioning if Gross National Product (GNP) could really measure welfare. Although these views were not totally new they encompassed environmental externalities such as pollution and noise. However, there was also a view that population growth in countries like India would lead to massive famine and therefore spending resources in these countries was futile. Counter to this was an equally extreme view that the Earth had no limits to the amount of food that could be produced. Consequently it can be seen that the 1960's were a time of extreme views that were actually harmful to both sides of the debate on sustainable development as theories and counter theories were easily discredited.

Looking at the history of the more recent processes assists in understanding how we have come to certain definitions of sustainable development and also processes of community development, empowerment and capacity building. The debate has been held at a very high political level but also involved many local actors particularly in the form of NGOs.

By the early 1970's sustainable development was still not a 'hot' political topic and only two national leaders attended the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 (the prime ministers of Sweden and India). But one of the key outcomes from this conference was the creation of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). By 1980 however, the report of the Brandt Commission helped to establish that the relationship between environmental degradation, population growth and social inequities was complex. Separate to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, in 1974 the World Council of Churches convened an ecumenical study conference on Science and Technology for Hu-

man Development where they saw the linkage between social justice and growing ecological problems were defining what they saw as a 'sustainable society'. Critical to the debate on community involvement in sustainable development the Council of Churches espoused the concept of 'democratic participation' which did not really appear on the more mainstream sustainable development horizon for twenty more years until the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.

1980 saw the publication of the World Conservation Strategy which actually coined the term 'sustainable development' but as their emphasis was very much on environmental and conservationist issues it was criticised heavily by the economic development faction. But in 1982 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to establish a commission – The Brundtland Commission. It was chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland and convened to address the growing concern about “the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development”¹. Within their terms of reference they had to focus on (amongst other things) “ways in which concern for the environment may be translated into greater co-operation amongst developing countries and between countries at different stages of economic and social development and lead to the achievement of common and mutually supportive objectives which take account of the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development”². This culminated in the publishing of the Brundtland Report in 1987. Their work made the idea of sustainable development much more politically acceptable to all parties by simplifying it but this of itself leads to much criticism that their definition is too vague and not action oriented. But ultimately two key sides of the debate could accept it – the economists could accept the report as there was nothing in it to absolutely stop economic growth, and the environmentalists could accept it as there was recognition of environmental limits to the capacity of the Earth. It therefore has become a milestone in sustainable develop-

¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 42/187,00 December 1987: Accessed August 03, 2007

² General Assembly Resolution 38/161 Accessed August 03, 2007

ment even if at the time there was not a great deal of direction for action given or taken.

Making it more action oriented was partly addressed in 1992 by the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro which was one of the suggestions from the Brundtland report. Whilst there were several outcomes intended from the summit including placing the global environment as a central political issue, the most relevant one to give a direction for action (particularly at a local level) was 'Agenda 21'. From this point forward the political debate was more about how to deal with the issues involved with this and implementing sustainable development initiatives. In reality not much was achieved in the next ten years which makes more notable those local activities that did happen around the globe.

Agenda 21 is primarily about how to implement sustainable development. One of its repeating themes is that this is best achieved through 'bottom-up' approaches of involving local communities, particularly previously excluded citizens such as women and NGOs. "The decentralisation of decision making towards local and community organisations is the key in changing people's behaviour and implementing sustainable farming strategies" (UNCED, 1992). This suggested to the participating countries that adaptation of technology and other approaches to the diverse local situation was appropriate rather than trying to find a one-size-fits-all approach. There is an understanding that 'top-down' projects are not the way forward and that 'bottom-up' participation will necessarily need a level of creating knowledge and skills within the community to facilitate their full participation.

This book takes a practical approach to how Belarus has implemented Agenda 21 at the local level. It has both some legal underpinning and a very practical focus. I have travelled to Belarus on several occasions to visit many of these sites and whilst there is a tremendous amount of work to be done, there is a need to make people aware of just how much is in fact happening at the local level. I first met Aleg in 2001 and I would have to say he is an 'evangelist' for sustainable development in Belarus; despite sometimes taking one step forward and three back because of frustrations out

of his control, he is never perturbed, and more often he keeps taking steps forward. Possibly because of the less than democratic situation in Belarus, people tend to concentrate on the National level of events there, but it is evident to me that there is a groundswell of movement at the local level that needs all the support it can get. It can not be supported if it is not known about – hence the need for this book to be available in English.

There is a fairly large section in the book that reflects the current legislative situation which is something in the UK we would possibly not even think about before a community started working on a project. However, it is necessary in Belarus to show people that they do have ‘permission’ to undertake LA21 initiatives which does reflect the political situation there; but also reflects Aleg’s determination to call everyone to arms, especially before 2010 when the current legislation expires.

In translating this book I have been ably assisted by Elvira Simonova and Alexei Sarotnik to whom I am indebted. Whilst I have been given editorial licence I have endeavoured to retain the full spirit of the work as sometimes, even in the way words are put together in a sentence, you learn a lot about the local situation. Final thanks to Aleg who has entrusted me with his work to help create an English edition.

Nicola Swan

Nicola Swan is currently working as the director of Sustainable Rural Development (Training and Research) Ltd which is her own company and operates in the field of sustainability particularly as it effects rural community development. She is also visiting faculty at Henley Business School which is part of Reading University. She has an MBA from Henley Management College in the UK as well as other post graduate qualifications in research methodology, consultancy and law. Previously, she was CEO for the Queensland Rural Medical Support Agency in Australia during its set up years. This was a government funded NGO set up to improve access to health services and continuity of care for remote communities (including Aboriginal communities). She is currently



the Programme consultant for the Arkleton Trust. This Trust was established by the late Sir John Higgs and colleagues in 1977 to study new approaches to rural education and development, and foster better communication between academics, rural communities, practitioners and policy makers. Other current appointments include: Chairman of the Goring and Streatley Sustainability Group, Vice chairman of the Parish Council for the rural village of Streatley in Berkshire; Founder, Director and Honorary Secretary for the International Rural Network (IRN). The IRN is an inclusive and interdisciplinary network of academics, rural community practitioners, activists, and policy makers who are engaged in rural community development, health and education in any country of the world. The aim of the network is as a means of sharing knowledge, research and experience, building capacities and establishing mutual assistance.

Nicola's practical management interests cover sustainability of the environment, rural health, education and agriculture from a management and community view point. Her academic interests focus on governance, corporate social responsibility, sustainable development and social capital particularly as both are implemented in developing and emerging economies.

Nicola has written and spoken widely on rural sustainable development issues internationally.

FORWARD TO THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE EDITION

Nowadays, without any doubt, there is no future for mankind without the successful inclusion of sustainable development principles into the all aspects of people's lives. However, transition to sustainable development is a rather difficult and long term process. Its success depends on the constant interaction of many players including business representatives, local, regional and national authorities, science, public organisations, educational institutes, mass media and churches. The regular exchange of experience with sustainable development activists in other countries is also an important factor for preserving and creating good living conditions for future generations.

The Republic of Belarus actively supported the UN initiatives in the field of sustainable development from the very beginning. The appearance of the book by Aleg Sivagrakau indicates that not only a lot has been done lately at the national level but also the process of forming a wide movement for local sustainable development has been started.

Preparation of this book was actively promoted by the "Support Programme of Belarus" of the German Federal Government. Not by accident assistance in achieving the goals and tasks of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020 is one of the priorities of that programme. As with most joint Belarusian-German initiatives (there are more than 600 of them) it started with the purpose of softening the impacts of the Chernobyl catastrophe. It was the explosion of the Chernobyl reactor in 1986 that demonstrated to many people the global risks of modern technological progress and gave an important incentive to search for strategies of sustainable development. Therefore, the slogan "Think globally – act locally" may be considered today as the dominant recurring theme of not only the

movement for sustainable development but also the partnership of collaboration between Belarusian and German initiatives.

Practically all the experiences of preparation and implementation of Local Agenda in Belarus, which were happening by the end of 2006 are presented and analysed in this book. That is why it should be equally interesting for those who have been working in the field of sustainable development for a long time, as well as to those who are just starting to get acquainted with the idea of sustainable development strategies. We hope that distribution of this book will contribute to intensify attention from the authorities and the public to the problems of sustainable development and also to promote further growth in the number of Local Agenda initiatives in Belarus.

Dr. Astrid Sabm,
January 2007

PREFACE FROM THE RUSSIAN EDITION

Recently we have seen a growing interest in the theme of sustainable development in Belarusian society. “The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020” (NSSD-2020), developed with the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and approved on the 22nd June, 2004 by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, attracted the attention of the representatives of different groups in our society. The words “sustainable development” are heard more often at Government ministry and departmental meetings, in the sessions of deputy Councils and sessions of executive committees at different levels, in forecast documents of state and private businesses and organisations. The theoretical aspects of sustainable development are discussed at scientific conferences and symposia. More and more gatherings held by public organisations, are concerned with the problems of sustainable development. In the capital and region centres, in districts, small and large towns, villages, local areas, farms, schools and children centres we see the organisation of public councils and local action groups; we see the creation of different initiative groups for the development and achievement of local strategies for sustainable development – Local Agenda 21 (LA21).

Participants of many seminars, round tables, meetings in different districts, towns and villages of Belarus often ask questions about the possibilities of getting additional information: “Were can one find out more about sustainable development? How can one get to know about other experiences of Local Agendas? What legislation and regulatory documents should we read? How do we find out the addresses of the first initiatives because, if you arrive there, you want to make sure that the first activities have been effective?”

In this book the reader will get answers on many of these questions. It is something like a “rough guide” for sustainable development at the local level in Belarus. Yet the book is not a fully comprehensive

manual, but it gives general recommendations for the working with LA21.

The years 2005-2014 have been proclaimed by the UN as the Decade of education for sustainable development. The study of experiences of LA21 and other similar initiatives in the field of sustainable development by local communities is an important part of this education, as it allows us to connect the theoretical aspects of sustainable development with their practical use in concrete areas.

It was not easy to finish this book. Nearly every new day brings new initiatives in sustainable development at the local level, the “veterans” – the participants of LA keep telling me of new achievements and projects, the representatives of different regions, towns and districts call and write, because they need expert support for the development of sustainable development strategies. The movement for sustainable development at the local level becomes broader and deeper.

The original book (in Russian) appeared with the help of the Programme of Support for Belarus by the Federal Government of Germany whose priorities are sustainable development and the achievement of the NSSD-2020.

The author is obliged to everybody, who helped to prepare this publication, helped to enrich it with ideas and facts, and who gave important criticism and made important documents, publications and photos available. Firstly, the director of the Minsk International Educational Centre (IBB) named after Johannes Ray, the head of the Programme of Support for Belarus by the Federal Government of Germany Dr. Astrid Sahn, who should be considered as a co-author of this publication. With the help of the recommendations of the following people the writing was fundamentally elaborated and enlarged: Dr. Victor Ermolenkov, Dr. Irina Bugrova, Dr. Sergey Solodovnikov, Dr. Valeriy Klimenko, and the director of the International public organisation “Education without borders” Galina Weremeichik. Olga Moroz, Dr. Anatoliy Rubanov, Dr. Alexandr Sykalo, Eduard and Alla Voitechovich, Victor Karpievich, Olga Machanenko, Dmitriy Sheviakov, Svetlana Andrucho-

vich, Dr. Dmitriy Karpievich, Galina Pavlovskaya, Yuozas Bulka, Yuliya Yablonskaja, Elena Kiseleva, Dr. Ludmila Elizarova, Galina Palskova, Aleksandr Popok, Galina Matushenko not only shared their material and told me about their experiences in specific districts, towns, villages and schools in developing Local Agenda. The negotiations with them, their important advice and optimism were very important for the author. The contacts and team-work made by the author with the following people, all respected experts at the international level, helped me to learn a great deal and to use this knowledge in writing this book: Professor Michael Dower, University of Gloucestershire, England, East Midlands Property Owners – EMPO Frank Hardy, the director of the International Rural Network Nicola Swan from the UK, also Ahto Oja from Estonia, Urszula Budzih-Szukala from Poland, Karin Bruce and Alina Ostling from Sweden.

The final stage of preparing this manuscript coincided with my work as the executive director of the International NGO “Living Partnership”. In compliance with their charter, the Living Partnership was created to take part in the achievement of the principles for sustainable development to preserve living conditions for future generations, to help the population of the Republic of Belarus who suffered from the Chernobyl catastrophe and to develop dialogue between different cultures. A priority direction for our organisation is to help in achieving National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020, including participation in the development of regional and local sustainable development strategies (LA21). The strategic plan, which was developed by the Living Partnership in summer 2006, determined as its main aim the expansion of the outlook on sustainable development and giving assistance in forming and strengthening the mechanisms for the achievement of this purpose in practice. I hope that this book will make a contribution to the achievement of these aims, and you, dear reader, will become an active participant of the Belarusian and international movement for sustainable development.

We do not stop researching and trying to increase the popularity of the themes, which the book is devoted to. Our work will continue,

and we would be glad to hear your comments, proposals, additions and information about your work in the field of sustainable development under the slogan “Think globally, act locally.”

Dr. Aleg Sivagrakau,
November 2006

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The interest in the Belarusian experience of Local Agenda 21, shown by foreign experts and representatives of local communities from different countries was the main reason for translating this book into the English language. Discussion about the idea to publicise an English version of the book “Think globally, act locally” (Russian title of the edition in 2007) with Belarusian and foreign colleagues showed that the view of Belarus, ‘from the outside’ as it is called, i.e. in the eyes of foreign experts and colleagues in the international movement for sustainable development, may often not be a full view or at least lopsided. The processes and events happening at the local level in Belarusian regions, towns, settlements and villages, are often not seen. They are concealed by the large scaled political and economic actions at the national level. But meanwhile the perception of the full picture of social, environmental and economic processes in Belarus is being lost. So we have produced this edition to fill in this gap at least to some extent.

Besides, in this regard the book contains not only examples of Local Agenda 21 implementation in Belarus, but also vast conceptual and analytical material and methodological recommendations about how to arrange works on LA21 and we wanted to make these materials accessible for English speaking audiences as well. We hope that they will be found useful in implementing the concept of sustainable development in local communities in other countries.

It is one and a half years since the first edition of this book in Russian. During this time the process of Local Agenda 21 in Belarus was not standing still. So some parts in the book, written in the future tense or as plans, have already been implemented. Examples include festivals in Disna, Lepel and Zheludok. Other plans are still being implemented like for example the problems, which occurred during preparation for registration of the local development foundations in Baran town and Smilovichi town, have not yet been solved. New

'players' have joined the movement for sustainable development at the local level. Among the most active ones there are representatives of School LA21 that have become leaders in some regions (further details are in the brochure "School Local Agenda: First Steps in Belarus." Minsk, J.Ray IBB, 2008). In the village of Zanaroch, Miadel district, the publication of the book "Zanaroch Village Council. Local Agenda 21" (Minsk, Navaprint, 2007) was one of the results of the work of this initiative group. New participants in the Local Agenda movement go forward at a steady gait – Kazimirovka, Mogilev local area and Ivanovo region, Brest district, Ananichi and Svisloch village councils, as well as other initiatives. For the first time in Belarus the "Ochag" (The Centre) condominium association in Minsk took a decision to create a sustainable development strategy for their local community. At the same time former LA21 leaders are keeping pace with them. The strategic committee of Disna County is implementing new projects from their Local Agenda 21. International NGO "Ecoproject Partnership" is working in collaboration with the administration of Minsk Pervomaiski region. Local Action Groups are working actively in Rossony region and Komarovo village, Miadel district.

Development and implementation of Local Agenda 21 is accompanied by educational and information events at a national level. The First Republican theoretical and practical conference "Sustainable Development of Territories. Local Agenda 21 in Belarus: Experience, Problems, Prospects" was held in Minsk in June 2007. It was organised by Minsk International Educational Centre (IBB) named after Johannes Ray and "Living Partnership" International NGO with the support of the UN/UNDP Office in Belarus, National Commission on Sustainable Development at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus and the European Centre of Eco Agro Tourism (ECEAT Project). One hundred people took part in the conference, including the representatives of 20 Local Agenda 21 initiative groups, non commercial organisations, educational establishments, national, regional and local authorities as well as other international organisations. There was a real exchange of experience on the practical work of LA21, discussion on problematic questions and creation of recommendations for further spreading

and strengthening of the movement for sustainable development at a local level.

Educational trips to Germany devoted to sustainable development took place in 2007 and 2008 under the framework of the "Support Programme of Belarus" of the German Federal Government (FPB). Belarusian experts and representatives of LA21 initiative groups from different regions of Belarus, including School LA21 participants, took part in those study tours. In 2008 FPB carried out a programme of teaching the consultants "Sustainable development at the local level. How to initiate, implement and provide efficient implementation of Local Agenda 21." Twenty representatives of LA21 initiative groups from different regions of Belarus were involved in this programme. The Scientific Café on Sustainable Development in the Republican Scientific and Technical Library continued their work. A "Public Reception" on Local Agenda 21 was established through the Living Partnership NGO in Minsk with support of the small grants programme of the of ISAR Inc. (USA) Mission in 2007. The Council of experts on sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 started its work through the Living Partnership NGO in the same year. Its members included the most experienced Belarusian experts from different state and non government organisations. A Coordinating Council on Education for Sustainable Development was set up and keeps on working under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus. Therefore, certain progress in mainstreaming the sustainable development movement in Belarus and in strengthening the national expert resource pool in this field can be seen.

The idea to re-edit this book in the English language was supported by the OSCE Office in Minsk, FPB and ECEAT Project. I express my gratitude for the support in publishing this book to Francois-Vadim de Hartingh and Natalia Belikova of the OSCE Office in Minsk. Their assistance, understanding and advice were very important to me. Dr. Astrid Sahm, Director of the IBB Minsk, as when publishing the Russian version of the book, remained my true companion-in-arms and I am grateful for her support. Menno Houtstra, Director of ECEAT Project who I was tied with thanks to during

our joint work on the project “International Solidarity Tour”, also made a meaningful contribution to supporting the translation and publication of the book which makes me thankful to him.

Particularly I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the role of Nicola Swan, Director of the Sustainable Rural Development (Training and Research) Ltd (Great Britain) and Director of the International Rural Network in the preparation of the book. From the very beginning she supported the idea of translation and publication of the book and offered her free assistance in the capacity of English editor. She got the hardest component of preparation of this book for publication. Her professionalism and reliability deserve the highest appreciation. I express my heartiest gratitude to her.

Dr. Aleg Sivagrakau,
September 2008

ABBREVIATIONS

CCHR	Children's Centre for Health and Rehabilitation
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPO	Charitable Public Organisation
CS	Civil Society
HABITAT	The UN Program for Human Settlements
HMS	Housing Maintenance Service
HRMA	Housing Repair and Maintenance Association
LA21 or LA	Local Agenda 21
LAG	Local Action Group
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NPC	Non Profit Corporation
NPSC	The Nuclear Power Station of Chernobyl
NSSD 2020	The National Strategy for Sustainable Development to 2020
PA	Public Association
PSBFGG	The Programme of Support for Belarus by the Federal Government of Germany
RSTL	Republican Scientific and Technical Library
SCW	Solid Communal Waste
Strategy 97	The National Strategy for Sustainable development of the Republic of Belarus (1997)
UBC	Union of Baltic Cities
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
VC	Village Council

1. THE BASIS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is a new paradigm for the development of humanity, which shows an understanding of the importance of a systemic approach (which combines economic, environmental and social issues) in the choice and achievement of development agendas. Expressions which have become proverbs “After us, let there be floods” or “It does not matter if in the future the grass does not grow” show a period in time when humanity’s thoughts about future generations were not a priority. At the same time the planet was thought to have enough resources, including land for comfortable living for a small population, and the environmental systems would not lose the ability to renew themselves following negative effects of humanity.

Today the situation has changed fundamentally. The proverb “Do not spit in the draw well; you will need it for drinking” becomes more important. Wars over territory and non-renewable energy resources, conflicts because of the widening gap between the richest and poorest groups of people, public protests because of the lack of opportunity for large groups of the population to take part in decision-making about national and local questions, all of these are features of the growing instability which have become part of the turbulent context we live in today. If we add the irrational level of consumption, non efficient use of energy, water and other resources, desertification, the loss of many endangered species (the problems of biodiversity) and parts of traditional culture (problems of cultural diversity), the growing volumes of toxic waste etc, then the picture will be much worse.

Problems, which cause instability in development:

- The worldwide growth of population
- The growing volume of waste products
- The non efficient use of energy resources
- Growing consumption patterns
- Social imbalance in the distribution of incomes and opportunities for decision making
- Destruction of biological and cultural diversity
- Poverty.

Sustainable development (SD) is “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This

definition, from the report “Our common future”, prepared by the UN International Commission for Environment and Development in 1987, became the main concept for the new paradigm of human development. In the definition, accepted at the UN Conference for Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 by the representatives of 179 countries “Agenda 21”¹ was the mechanism for implementing sustainable development and took on the status of the most important principle for the continued existence of the human race.

The above mentioned definition is not full and final, the concept of sustainable development is regularly re-examined because of the huge difficulties and global problems of human development. Dozens and even hundreds of variations to the definition of “sustainable development” are available in academic literature which confirms the importance of this problem.

Sustainable development presumes that the growth of the population and the economy must fit within the boundaries of the planet’s ecological capabilities and therefore must not damage the environment. Humanity must use the biological, water, air and mineral resources rationally in its development, and think about what, and in what condition, will it leave of future generations, and how to prevent a global ecological catastrophe on the planet. Everybody knows that it is easier to prevent a disease than to cure it. This saying rightly applies to the behaviour of humanity in respect of the environment. “In every beginning we must foresee what influence it will have on our offspring for the next seven generations” said the principle of the Irokes union².

But now it is not enough to follow these recommendations. Many researchers think that humanity reached the tipping point for sustainability, and now it is only possible to return on the path of sustainable development with the help of vigorous and tough meas-

¹ The structure of Agenda 21 and chapter 28 “Initiatives of local authorities for the support of LA21” are in Annexure 1.

² Editor’s Note: The union of the five (now six) confederate tribes, viz, the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas, and sixth the Tuscaroras, added in 1712, now forming “The Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy.” Source: Brewster’s Dictionary

ures. “During its existence the human civilization has not designed any technology which did not damage the environment” writes the author of the book “Facing the main challenge of civilization: Visions from Russia”³. For many centuries the biosphere resisted this destructive human activity. But from the beginning of the 20th century in all areas there were unilateral changes being made at a rapid rate, and at this speed of change to the environment nature could not keep up. This means that its regulative mechanisms can not counteract the destructive influence of civilization. This previously unknown ecological crisis was developed in the time span of only a single generation. By all available forecasts, “the environmental footprint”⁴ of the human population exceeds the planet’s potential resources by 20 to 30 %, i.e. the possibility for the planet to supply people with resources and absorb the waste products of man’s activity. In other words, the planet needs 1 year and 2 or 3 months to regenerate from 1 year of human activity.

The concept of sustainable development, which was initially formed as an answer to the ecological problems, gradually expands and deepens. Lately the social components of the sustainable development model have gained in importance and particularly the struggle against poverty. In Agenda 21 it is said that sustainable development is a method to eradicate the struggle against poverty and environment destruction.

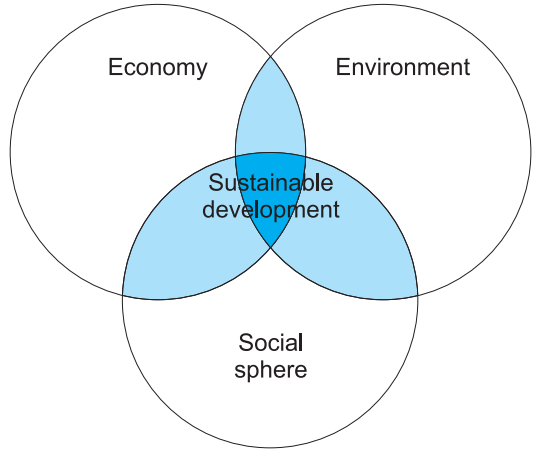
Of great importance to the approach, for which we can add another foundation to the three “pillars” on which sustainable development is based (social, economic and environmental) (Picture 1) is the institutional element.

It includes acts of legislation and administrative structures, whose aim is to support the processes of sustainable development at all levels from international to local levels.

³ Danilov-Danilyan, V. I, Losev, K.S. and Rejf, I.E. (2005) *Facing the main challenge of civilization: The view from Russia*. Moscow: INFRA

⁴ For amplification of this indicator for sustainable development you can see in chapter 3

In picture 2⁵ we can see a boy, who sits on a buffalo and plays on a flute. According to Professor Michael Dower, this picture is very popular in Vietnam, where he used it as a symbol during a training event for officials, who were invited by the Ministry of Agriculture of Vietnam. The four legs of the buffalo symbolise the four pillars of sustainable development. One of the front legs represents the people and their skills (the social base of sustainable development). The second front leg is the environment. The front legs are responsible for controlling movement. The hind legs the economy and institutions (including ideas) support the movements with propulsion or energy. The boy, who plays on the flute, leads the population, who must provide the impetus to the authorities for the process of sustainable development as a whole.



Picture 1.
Sustainable development

The commitment of the world community to the principles of sustainable development was confirmed at the worldwide summit for sustainable development in Johannesburg in 2002. At the summit the progress and problems on the way to achieving sustainable development over the last 10 years were discussed, and the potential areas for further development of the principles of Local Agenda 21 were determined.

⁵ The picture was borrowed by the author from a presentation by the head of the programme PREPARE of the EU (Professor Michael Dower, University of Gloucestershire, England) on the theme “Sustainable development of village territories”, which was presented at a conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005. Professor Michael Dower helpfully gave permission for the use of the picture in this publication

For the development of a plan for effective application of the principles of Local Agenda 21 in the future the participants of the summit determined the following priority areas of work:

- Poverty
- Water and sanitation
- Energy
- Climate change
- Nature resources and biodiversity
- Trade and globalisation
- Contaminants.



Picture 2. Sustainable development – figuratively shown

At the summit the Plan for the Realisation of the decisions and the Declaration of Johannesburg were accepted⁶. The conceptual ‘rules’ of the theory for sustainable development, available in LA21 and in other international documents based on scientific research, were formulated as requirements in the

policy as well as principles and concrete approaches for the solution of particular problems.

Among the major principles of sustainable development are:

- Nature-conservation imperative (a reference point for the limitations of allowable levels of human influence on the ecosystem).
- A systemic approach (a complex overview of the problem, the creation of action plans and their achievement, taking into account the economic, environmental and social factors).
- Taking a target approach (setting goals and building action plans aimed at achieving those targets).

⁶ Full text of the decisions made can be found at: http://www.un.org/esa/sust-dev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/POI_PD.htm

- Process (understanding that the strategy for sustainable development is a process of long-term actions, not only the creation of a document with this name).
 - Partnership (the cooperation of all participants in the process for sustainable development, including representatives of state and local authorities, business, public organisations and the academic community).
 - Equality of generations (improvement of peoples' quality of life both today and for future generations).
 - Openness and transparency of action plans developed under the framework of sustainable development.
- The major motive of LA21 is achievement of a policy, that is directed towards the achievement of following aims:

 - Environmental (support of productivity of ecosystems and the maintenance of biodiversity).
 - Economic (satisfaction of the basic needs of people, creation of mechanisms for fair distribution of resources, increase in the production of generally useful goods and services).
 - Social (cultural pluralism, institutional stability, social justice, participation of all groups of people in the making of decisions).

Among the actual directions and methods for the move to sustainable development we can identify the following:

- Updating production techniques for the use of alternative technologies, reducing the negative influence of the economy on the environment (development of high tech alternative energy production, which uses alternative energy sources, the introduction of clean production, organic agriculture and building environmentally friendly housing).
- The use of local renewable resources.
- The reduction of transport pollution, also with the help of rational spatial and city planning, allocation of production facilities, the development of public transport and bicycle options and the replacement of physical transport requirement by information streams (virtual technology).
- The development of state and local plans for development, which take on board the aims and principles of sustainable development.

- Changing consumption stereotypes for more economical material consumption and attributing high value and social status lowering consumption of resources by business.
- The sharing of sustainable practices in life.
- The use of potential international cooperation in the field of sustainable development, building on the experience of developed countries, using progressive engineering and technologies, the development of inter boundary cooperation and international ties between twinned cities.

The ideas of sustainable development were spread around the world very actively over the last 10 to 15 years. Many countries made real steps towards achieving sustainable development, including: state



The landscape of a sustainable region

agencies, councils, commissions, committees of governments or heads of states, and even ministries for sustainable development in Bolivia and Sweden have been created and documents at national levels, which direct the method for achieving sustainability were and are created (sustainable development strategies and concepts,

laws, other regulatory and methodical documents). Models for sustainable production and consumption are being distributed more and more.

A key principle to remember for the development and achievement of national strategies for sustainable development is that the strategies are not just documents. The Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) defines a sustainable development strategy as “A co-ordinated set of participatory and continuously improving processes of analysis, debate, capacity-strengthening,

planning and investment, which integrates the economic, social and environmental objectives of society, seeking trade offs where this is not possible” (OECD, 2001: Pg 16). A major principle of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development is partnership, which means to involve representatives of different groups of society, state and public organisations, scientists and business circles in these processes.

The first National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus was written in 1996 and approved by the government of the Republic of Belarus at the beginning of 1997; it became an important step in the achievement of the obligations of Belarus in executing LA21 and had put in place the foundations for new approaches to state forecasting and planning.

In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Belarus, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development is reviewed every 5 years for a 15 years term. In 2004 the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus approved the NSSD to 2020. In the Republic of Belarus work in the field of sustainable development is controlled by the National Commission for Sustainable Development under the Council of Ministers.

2. LOCAL AGENDA 21 AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AT A LOCAL LEVEL

The UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 proclaimed the development and implementation of LA21 as one of the ways to achieve sustainable development. This programme of reforms suggested in Rio has become a turning point in aligning human development with sustainability. During the preparations to the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 the extent of LA21 work in the world was evaluated. During the ten year period, 1992 – 2002, 6,500 such initiatives had been developed (or they were in the process of implementation) in 113 different countries of the world. Local sustainable development initiatives appeared and were implemented at the level of large territories, covering large parts of countries, as well as at the level of cities, regions and even villages, micro regions, housing blocks and schools.

“Think globally, act locally!” This phrase has become an informal slogan for local sustainable development work in communities in many countries all over the world. The slogan includes two fundamental

components. The first; only by the cooperation of all countries in the world can an ecological catastrophe be prevented; can poverty be abolished; can the air be made cleaner; and can biological biodiversity be preserved. Secondly, this approach underlines



the importance and effectiveness of concrete actions in the sustainable development movement at a local level in every town, settlement, village, micro region and school.

Such active participation of local communities in sustainable development initiatives exists precisely because it is at a local level that people notice and feel the appearance of threats of unsustainable development. “If we don’t take climate change into account, the economic damage from the destruction of the environment mainly has a local impact: disappearance of fish, pollution of soil, and loss of wood areas. However such local phenomena, while accumulating, can become global ecological trends. For the world economy, which becomes more and more integrated, the downfall of local ecosystems can have global economical consequences”¹, – wrote Lester Brown.

Compared with traditional forms of planning and local development, the following characteristics have become fundamental features of LA21:

- LA21 is not instigated only by local authorities. Very often public organisations, NGOs, groups of people, and active individuals become the initiators of such work. Partnership is an important condition and a major criterion for the success of LA21.
- LA21 is mainly associated with the term “process” not “document”, i.e. it is oriented towards permanent actions, concrete changes and positive results.
- The main concept of LA21 is a concrete goal – the vision for the future. Further work develops in accordance with the original vision. It gives all its parts a common direction, improving the overall effectiveness of the work.
- According to sustainable development principles, LA21 is based on a combined approach, which connects economic, social, environmental and institutional aims and processes for their achievement.
- Creation of working groups for each problem is the most widespread and effective method of implementing LA21. The representatives of municipalities, NGOs, local business and other interested groups of people are participants of these groups.

¹ Brown, L. (2003) *Eco-Economy. Building an economy for the earth. How to create an economy and preserving the planet*. Russian Edition. Moscow: Ves Mir. Pp. 41–42



Disna Town from a bird's eye view

Participants of the European Conference for Sustainable Development of Large and Small European Towns, held in Aalborg, Denmark, on May 27, 1994, accepted a Charter called “Charter of European cities and towns towards sustainability²”. In the charter it is said: “We are convinced that sustainable

human life on this globe cannot be achieved without sustainable local communities. Local government is close to where environmental problems are perceived and closest to the citizens and shares responsibility with governments at all levels for the well-being of humankind and nature. Therefore, cities and towns are key players in the process of changing lifestyles, production, consumption and spatial patterns”. This status confirms the importance of the development

During the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 a large number of local authorities interested in sustainable development were seen at sittings of specially organised sessions for local authorities. These Sessions accepted the Appeal of Johannesburg, which included the proposal to change the name of Local Agenda 21 to Local Action 21. This idea was planned to strengthen the focus of authorities about this method of development, to put the emphasis on the implementation of plans and strategies for sustainable development of localities. It was not accepted.

and implementation of local sustainable development strategies, and expresses the hope that such initiatives will be successful.

In the Republic of Belarus the pioneers in the area of planning for and implementa-

tion of LA21 are Turow town and the Rehabilitation Centre for children “Nadezhda”, who started their activities in 1999. Later Pervomayski district in Minsk, Kopatkevichi town in Gomel region,

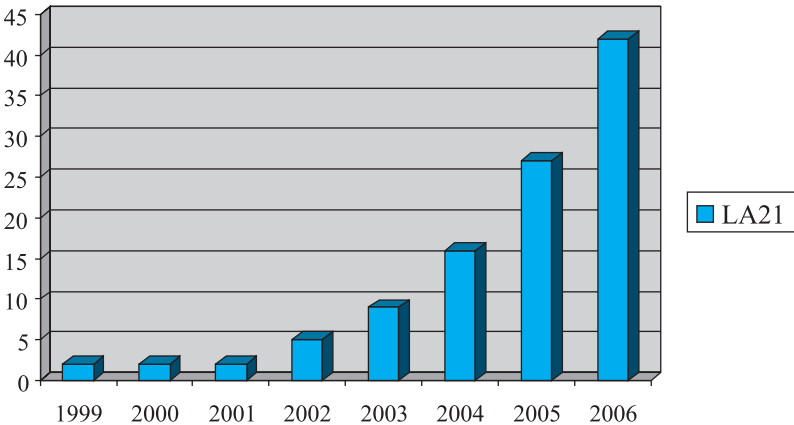
² Editors Note: Full text at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/pdf/aalborg_charter.pdf

Dzerzhinsk and Fanipol towns, school #12 of Novopolotsk city in Vitebsk region (who wrote the first School Agenda 21 in Belarus), the local area Zapad in Minsk city and other settlements and organisations joined this work.

In 2005 the Scientific Research Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Problems in cooperation with the academic community, city services and republican organisations developed the “Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of Minsk City to 2020”, which was approved on March 24th 2005 by Resolution of the Minsk Deputy Council.

From 2004 to 2005 in Disna County, which united Disna town in Vitebsk Region and four neighbouring Village Councils, they began development and implementation of LA21 in cooperation with the project “Localising Sustainable Development” of the Regional UNDP Office for Central Europe and CIS Countries in Bratislava. Representatives of the local community were up-skilled at training seminars in Poland and Lithuania. Belarusian and foreign experts (from Estonia and Poland) visited Disna County, where they studied the local potential, evaluated opportunities and threats for development, planned strategies and determined priorities for the LA21 together with the local community members, who formed a Local Action Group. This strategy has already been published and the

Figure 2: The number of initiatives on the local level in the Republic of Belarus



local community is undertaking the next practical steps to implement it.

Table 1: The distribution of initiatives in the field of sustainable development at the local level by regions and years according to when the work began³

Name of the region	Number of LA21	Name of the district, town, village, organisation who were the initiators of the LA21 initiative					
		1999	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Brest region	3				Kosovo village		Centre "Sputnik" in Brest city
Vitebsk region	7		School #12 of Novopolotsk city	Disna County	Perebrodie village, Baran town		Lepelski district, Rossonski district, Verchedvinski district
Gomel region	5	Turow town			Kopatkevichi village	Gomel town, Mozyr town	Oktiabrski district
Grodno region	5					Mir town, Korelichi town, Berezovka town, Voroncha village	Zheludok town
Minsk city	7		Per-vomayski district	Local area Zapad	Gymnasium ¹ #6	Children's Centre "Ranak", Health Centre "Staiki"	Gymnasium #20
Minsk region	11	Children's Centre "Nadezhda"		Fanipol town	Zaslavl town	Machulishi town, Luban town, Ivenetski County	Grebenska village, Smilovich town, Komarovo village, Starodorozhski district
Mogilev region	4				Gorki town		Mogilev town, Byhov town, Gluski district

Editor's Note: The word gymnasium is a literal translation from the Russian however it is a type of school (7–18 year olds). Whilst they do not have a public and private system, gymnasiums are 'different' from ordinary schools in that they usually have a better quality of education.

The thematic "specialisation" of LA in different districts and settlements is different (see Table 2). In some of them LA21 priorities are not yet determined because the work is moving slowly.

Why do international organisations (the UN, the World Bank, other international organisations, etc.) support the development and implementation of LA21? What makes governments of many countries give funds for programmes and projects within LA21? Why are representatives of local authorities, business, and NGOs interested in becoming included in the initiative groups and participating in the implementation of LA21? The answers to these questions have both a general basis, as well as being related to the specific interests of the abovementioned participants in the world movement for sustainable development.

³ Data collected by the author

Table 2: Thematic elections of LA in Belarus⁴

	CC "Nadezhda"	Turov town	Pervomajski district of Minsk	School # 12 of Novopolotsk	Minsk city	Dzina County	Fanipol town	Local area "Zapad" in Minsk	Baran town	Kopatkevichi town	Ivenetski County	Komarovo town	Zaslavl town	Rossonski district	Lepelski district	Smilovichi village
Energy saving, renewable energy resources	Dark Blue											Dark Blue				
Protection of nature, biodiversity																
Historical and cultural activity		Dark Blue				Dark Blue				Dark Blue				Light Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue
Solutions to waste problems	Dark Blue		Dark Blue													
Organic agriculture	Dark Blue											Dark Blue				
Education for sustainable development				Dark Blue												
Agro and ecotourism						Dark Blue								Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue
Water problems																
Architectural planning decisions						Dark Blue	Dark Blue									
Reduction of unemployment																
The development of partnerships between state structures, public organisations and business																

The common interest is the wish of many international and local organisations and active people to make a contribution to the solutions of humanity’s problems, support them with the available resources and make efforts to educate society about sustainable development.

⁴ In the table you can see the general analysis of documents and of the reality of LA in a number of districts, settlements and organisations of Belarus. Not all the chosen sites have developed a document of LA at the time of the analysis, but work on them has already begun, and the available data (results of a SWOT analysis, protocols of meetings, plans and decisions of local authorities, and the results of completed projects) allowed the author to uncover thematic priorities of the actual activity. The darker colour shows the priority issues for the corresponding LA, the lighter colour shows areas where the local initiatives also pay attention.

International organisations, for which sustainable development became the major principle of their strategic plans, see in Local Agenda 21 a real tool for the expansion of sustainable development ideas and educating people. They understand that the implementation of small changes at the local level can make a great contribution to international and national efforts of sustainable development. That is why the slogan of the Meeting on Local Initiatives, held under the auspices of the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, was: “Many small people in many small towns and villages, while doing small things, change the world”.

Governments of many countries show much interest in promoting Local Agenda 21 and give organisational, legal and financial help. This can be explained because with the help of development and implementation of LA21 and other similar initiatives we can see the following positive processes, which have a great and positive influence on development for the whole country:

- Highest state government structures get some small and less significant local functions free that help them to concentrate their attention on the implementation of strategic questions at the national level.
- Development and implementation of LA21 helps to attract extra domestic and foreign resources, so, the general volume of resources, used for the country’s development, will rise.
- Coordinated use of resources (in the form of joint strategies for local sustainable development) allows an increase of effectiveness and creates a synergistic effect, all of which will have a positive influence on the position of the whole country.
- LA21 documents from different local communities (from regions to villages and schools) allows higher state government structures to ascertain trends of social, environmental and economic processes and react more promptly.
- The wishes of the people, reflected in the vision statement for their desired future and priorities for development of certain territories, provide important information for making decisions at the national level which can affect the interests of this local community. This information can help to prevent inefficient use of resources and social conflicts.

Local authorities are interested in the development and implementation of Local Agenda 21 because it allows for:

- Uniting people for solving common problems, removing “closed ranks” within local communities, which reduces social tension and prevents conflicts.
- Uniting separate actions into a systemic approach for development, (as opposed to a silo or sector based one), determining priorities and concentrating the efforts and resources on strategic directions.
- Improving effectiveness of the use of available potential, to locate the hidden development reserves and attract extra (internal or external) resources.
- Helping to maintain support for decisions taken, to increase the trust of voters.
- Creating a positive image of the local community.

The authors of the “Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of Minsk City to 2020” underline how important it is, that “the Strategic Plan allows integrating the priority development directions of territories with the social and political. In other words it brings together the municipal community including authorities, ordinary people, political parties and public structures – otherwise, success can not be achieved. It makes the mechanism for city governance more open, allows people, all public bodies, and representatives of all scientific, managing, financial and other organisations to take part in decisions making and implementation of the decisions. This is one of the major values of the Strategic Plan”⁵.

The question could be asked: Why is it necessary to develop a Local Agenda 21, when in accordance with the law local authorities in towns and districts prepare and implement programmes and plans for the development of their territories? The question can be answered in the following way:

- We can not regard Local Agenda 21 as a document, developed instead of the available programmes and plans. LA21 enlarges the system of forecasting and planning at the local level, making it complete. LA21 is developed for a longer period (10 – 20

⁵ Strategic plan of sustainable development of Minsk city for the period to 2020. (2005) Minsk: Minsk City Executive Committee. P. 10.

- years) than short and medium term plans. This provides continuity for the sustainable development pathway for a particular area.
- LA21 reflects the strategic aims and directions of local community development, allowing community members to take part in it and it is less exposed to administrative influence and subjective points of view than local development by external authorities.
 - Development of LA21 includes not only “traditional” specialists from the local administration, but a larger number of experts, which allows community problems and their solutions to be viewed in a different way.
 - LA21 is not limited by existing regulations and approaches; it is a more flexible tool for development. The emphasis, structure and mechanisms of LA21 can be adapted to account for the diversity of certain situations which can be achieved in a set period of time.
 - It is possible to develop LA21 for areas whose borders do not coincide with the borders of administrative or territorial division or include several administrative structures. Disna County is an example of such an area.
 - In LA21 it is possible to reflect the environmental development aspect to a larger degree, than it is in “traditional” development programmes and plans.



Bicycles solve transport and environmental problems simultaneously

Public organisations and initiatives can find in Local Agenda the following:

- The possibility to establish structural business relationships with local authorities.
- A tool for lobbying about concerns of the local community.

- Additional resources from local and foreign sources for the implementation of LA21 and their subsequent evaluation.

Business representatives of many countries work actively in Local Action Groups and support LA21, because it allows them to:

- Take part directly in the process of strategic planning and development of plans for LA21. That gives them the opportunity to be included in implementation of new “development events” as business partners (investors, executors, trade agents etc).
- Find new niches for their businesses, especially in the area of “green technologies”, to develop and introduce alternative energy sources, to implement “Factor 4”⁶ and “Factor 10”⁷ approaches and to be among the leaders by mastering these new opportunities for business.
- Strengthen the positive image of their companies as participants in the movement for sustainable development by making a contribution to the solution of social and environmental problems of the local community.

People of the community receive the following opportunities with the help of LA21 development, implementation, and their active participation in it:

- Improvement of the socio-economic and environmental conditions of life in their community.
- Implementation of their ideas and using their abilities for revival of their “local homeland”.

⁶ World famous specialists in the area of environment protection developed a concept, which was spelt out in the report “Factor 4. Doubling Wealth, Halving Resources Halving Resource Use and Least Cost Energy” for the Rome Club in 1995 by E. Von Weizäcker, A.B. Lovins, L.H. Lovins. Factor 4 offers a new approach to progress, putting the productivity of resources on the top. As authors affirm, we can live twice as well and spend half as much resource; and this is important for the development of humanity in the future. The outcome is: that we should use electricity, water, fuel, materials, fertile acres etc more effectively, often without extra costs and even making profits. As the Factor 4 shows (with the use of 50 examples) the majority of technical solutions are already available and we must use them now.

⁷ Similar to the Factor 4 concept and public movement, the aim is to achieve tenfold growth of effectiveness in use of nature resources and materials during the life of one generation. There is an international scientific club Factor 10 and institutes, who are busy with the development of this concept, see for example: www.factor10-institute.org.

- Having their concerns listened to in planning and implementing strategies for territorial development.
- Feel ownership and control in the development of the local community.
- Acquire new skills, knowledge, even professions and sources for earning extra money.
- Make their life more interesting, eventful, more fruitful and even more effective.
- Find new like-minded people and friends.

When experts from Estonia answered our question, ‘What community members and self-government organisations receive thanks to the development of Local Agenda 21?’ they listed the following useful effects⁸:

- Self esteem.
- Experience of cooperation.
- Experience of discussions.
- Braveness in using civil rights to express opinions, taking part in discussion about the problems of their native district and the whole community.
- Skills of democratic participation (first inform the people, and then make decisions).



It is interesting at festivals both for children and adults. Zaborski Fest.

- Better understanding of their own problems leading to greater understanding of the problems of a larger area.

The practice shows, that development of the local strategy is important for potential external participants of sustainable development in a town or village (investors,

⁸ Vaht, J. Kuldna, P. and Oja A. (2001) *Local Agenda 21*. Tallinn: SEI. P. 56.

donor organisations). Comparing all good and bad sides of different towns, investors take Local Agenda 21 into account as a positive characteristic. The availability of a Local Agenda 21 means the following for them:

- Indicator of competent and modern local authorities.
- Evidence that the town implements principles of partnership between different groups of the population and authorities which is very important for the achievement of social stability and cohesion in the community.
- Potential opportunity to use the image of Local Agenda 21 in the town to support the positive reputation of their business.

Everything that has been said can be summed up by one article from the Recommendations of the International Scientific and Practical Conference for Sustainable Development, held in spring 2004 in Minsk, Belarus: “There is positive proof that promoting to the country the strategic way of adopting sustainable development has been Local Agenda 21”.

⁹ International scientific-practical conference on sustainable development. (2004) *Plenary session*. May 27 – 28, 2004. Minsk: Unipak. P. 109.

3. FLOW CHART OF THE LOCAL AGENDA 21 PROCESS

We can not give a one and only “recipe” for the effective organisation of Local Agenda 21 work. We can find different approaches which are more or less justified. Every town or village can find its own way to develop sustainably. Nobody wants all municipalities to be identical, i.e. that somebody from higher authorities established an approved and strictly regulated procedure for the development of Local Agenda 21. Problems with this approach to social and economic planning existed in the Soviet Union and are still partially present in Belarus now. They have been known for a long time. That is why an important part of the mechanism of Local Agenda 21 is the participation of local community representatives in its development and the proactive acceptance of LA21 by the local community. The promise of vitality through LA21 is seen in creative adoption of its approaches and tools. So the following material should be regarded as possible scenarios¹ for developing and implementing Local Agenda 21. It is based on summarising the experience of Local Agenda 21 in Belarus and abroad as well as from recommendations of experts.

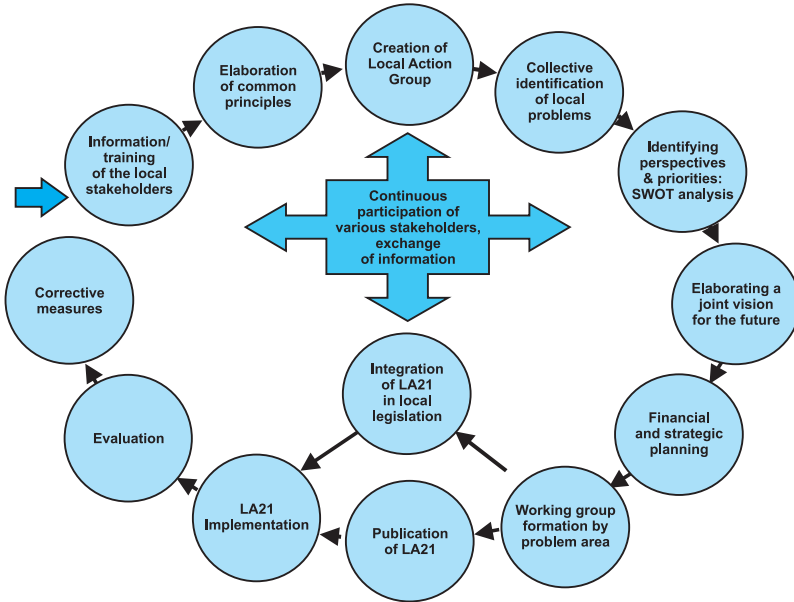
The “algorithm” of Local Agenda 21 work can be represented as a figure (see figure 3).

Communication and initial teaching of local community representatives to understand the principles of sustainable development are the first steps in preparation for Local Agenda 21. Frequently learning about the concepts of sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 happens during seminars, round table discussions, consultations or comes from reading publications. The participants can be representatives of local authorities, who could study the course “Sustainable Development” under the framework of programmes for professional development of the ‘Institute for Higher Governing Staff of the Management Academy under the President of the Republic

¹ In the development of ones own Local Agenda it would be advisably to use the Internet, where new materials about sustainable development at the local level appear continuously. One such available document is the Handbook for Local Agenda 21 which is of great value. It was prepared by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

Flow chart of the Local Agenda 21 process

Figure 3: The LA21 development and implementation process



of Belarus’; representatives of a local non government organisation (NGO) or active members of the local community who can take part in a seminar, training or round table event during any programme or project. There may certainly be other ways. Either way, when people become interested in this subject, they often feel the need to get further information and education. Besides the normal search for information in the Internet, you can get help from qualified experts in the area of sustainable development, from public organisations, NGOs and international or foreign programmes which deal with this subject. “The door is opened for those who knock on it” is a wise saying, confirmed by the first initiators of Local Agenda 21 in Belarus. You can ask the authors and implementers of Belarusian local sustainable development strategies, or use the first Belarusian Library for Sustainable Development, organised under the auspices of the Republican Scientific and Technical Library (RSTL). You must try to interest other representatives of local authorities, officials of executive committees, deputies, businessmen, friends and colleagues in your idea. To make the local community “ready” to begin the work with Local Agenda 21, sometimes it is important

to hold two or three learning events. These can be seminars, round table discussions, conferences, joint visits to communities or organisations where Local Agenda 21 has been implemented (in Belarus or abroad).



A group of LA21 experts from different regions of Belarus during training under the “Support Programme for Belarus” of the German Federal Government

Development of fundamental principles, to secure the foundation for the forthcoming development and implementation of the Local Agenda 21 it is necessary to produce something similar to an agreement about the rules of the game. In such an agreement it is important to understand the commonality of interests and tasks, to establish

confidence between participants of the Local Agenda 21 and to strengthen the agreement to similar values. Some of these principles are:

- Partnership
- Openness and transparency
- Taking into account the interests of future generations
- Combining economic, environmental and social aims by formation of programmes and planning of arrangements in the area of local development (this question will be examined more thoroughly later).

All members of the future team of Local Agenda 21, like representatives of local authorities and other representatives of the local community, members of public organisations and businesspersons, teachers and doctors, pensioners and young people have to agree with the given principles².

² Besides the named principles, participants of the Local Agenda work can accept others as well. For example, the ‘Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities’

Creation of Local Action Groups (LAG), which includes local authority, NGO and business representatives is the next step in the work³. The step must not be strengthened (authoritatively), and such a group must not be formally instituted without the wish of the participants. Such an approach can even discredit the new initiative. A dynamic interest in and understanding of sustainable development philosophies are major criteria for the future success of the work within Local Agenda 21. The LAG could be created at the end of one learning event, when the team work determines the most active and interested participants. The number of LAG participants is determined taking into account certain conditions and opportunities. It is better to create groups of a medium size – approximately 10 to 15 people, which gives everybody the likelihood of involvement in effective work. That will also help ensure a quorum of participants is achievable in all meetings (50% + 1 voice) maintaining the opportunity for active discussion but ensuring acceptance of important decisions. It would be better to choose a leader and coordinator of the LAG to solve organisational questions, convene meetings etc. She/he has to make and give a list with participants' names, their addresses, phone numbers and e-mails to all members of the LAG. The LAG leader will also be responsible for setting the theme and the date of the next meeting and design an agenda. **Accept my congratulations: your Local Agenda has already been started!**

It is important to remember that the time that the LAG is created is also a mechanism for involving the community in LA21 work. You cannot isolate yourself and work privately “inside” Local Agenda. Doing this you cannot uphold the major principles of this work – bottom-up community involvement. That is why regularly informing people with notifications about coming events, reports about the finished work, inquiries about subjects of planned actions, invitations to take part in meetings must all become an essential part

can be used for their development which can be downloaded as a PDF file from: [http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/EE4E29F83C93A8E6CA256FE80027D069/\\$File/Melb-Sus-Cities.pdf](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/EE4E29F83C93A8E6CA256FE80027D069/$File/Melb-Sus-Cities.pdf)

³ Editor's note: Under the European programmes called LEADER + the representatives must be at least 50% from the community sector rather than from authorities – this does not appear to be the case in Belarus.

From the outset of the Local Agenda 21 work we should not forget the questions of efficient organisation and documentation of this process. The important status of LA21 requires a corresponding attention to its details. Moreover good problem solving procedures will be very helpful in the future, being an important factor for achievement of effectiveness of local community work.

Experts recommend to keep in mind the following rules for organising meetings and consultations:

- Be sure to have a quorum present.
- Establish how many people are required to vote.
- Always take minutes of meetings. Copies of the minutes should be typed up and distributed to those present and those who have sent apologies. A copy should also be kept on file.
- At the start of a meeting, begin by reviewing the minutes of the previous meeting and checking to see if any actions have been completed.
- Always have an agenda for the meeting.
- Always give those who wish to speak the opportunity to do so, and listen respectfully to their opinions.
- Make decisions based on what is best for the organisation and its target group, not because of opinions, fear, anger or favouritism.
- After a decision is taken, always decide who will take the action, and when it should be completed by. Make sure that all members understand the decision.
- Decide on the place, date and time of the next meeting.

From: CIIR (n.d.) Capacity building for local NGOs: A guidance manual for good practice. P. 30–37 [online]. Available at: <http://www.ciir.org>

of the LAG daily work. The aim is to include more people from the local community in the process of Local Agenda 21. This is the strength and effectiveness of local strategies for sustainable development.

Slovakian experts in the development of Local Agenda 21 recommend: “The more partners are involved in LA21, the easier it will be to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings in the future. It is important to give an opportunity to everybody who is interested in the programme of LA21. Of course it is not easy to achieve consensus in a large team, but a

large number of participants makes the innovative potential larger, creates new ideas, gives important personal experience and unites people with each other”⁴.

Collection and analysis of data about the social, environmental and economic situation in the region or community is an important foundation for the next actions in the framework of Local Agenda 21. A new “picture” of the local community is developed on the

⁴ Mederley, P. (2004) *Local Agenda 21. Methodological Manual Based on Experiences from Slovakia*. Bratislava: Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. P. 26.

basis of official statistics and collection of the extra data. In this case the detailed research, discovery of new and existing development potential are very important, because elements of the local strategy will be based on this in the future. For example, analysis of the range of agricultural products cultivated on smallholding lands can be a foundation for development of recommendations for cooperative reprocessing plants. A tool for data collection can be surveying of people (sometimes by categories, including, for example, schoolchildren). This type of poll can identify interested local community representatives who want to take part in the development and implementation of Local Agenda 21; identify the greatest problems; and point to how the people want to see their community or district in the future. Very often outside experts are involved in the situation analysis. But it is also important to invite local residents, including the LAG, to collect and analyse the data. This can be description of local points of interest, traditions and customs, important dates and memorable places. Students at universities can carry out this work as part of their studies, diplomas and degree programmes. It is important to make

Experts from Slovakia advise to use the following possible development characteristics for analysis of the municipality (town, district or village):

- What are the internal and external conditions for spatial planning?
- How are the local resources used for development?
- What information and documents are required?
- What partnerships (internal or external) exist in the municipality?
- What the economic situation is like (unemployment, development of new business ventures, availability of business plans by enterprises etc)?
- What the quality of people's life and environment is like?
- How self-government is developed and what possibilities of inter-regional cooperation are there?
- What documents in the area of spatial planning are available in the municipality? (it is important to know whether they are too old and whether their quality is good enough etc).
- How much is the population involved in the process of spatial planning; what local public initiatives exist; what arrangements for spatial planning are carried out; and who can be asked when looking for cooperation (including external experts)?
- What the tasks of each partner are?
- What can be done to undertake educational events and public meetings to help to develop the interest of community in taking part in the LA21 work?

From: Mederley, P. (2004) *Local Agenda 21. Methodological Manual Based on Experiences from Slovakia* Bratislava. Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. P. 32.

the community members feel ownership of the sustainable development strategy at this stage, and make them understand the sense of their participation in changing their town's, village's or district's appearance.

SWOT analysis⁵ is better done after or simultaneously with collecting and analysing data about the situation. It can be combined with one of the educational events. As a rule, a SWOT analysis is executed by a group of experts and representatives of the community. After getting together, the participants of the SWOT-analysis determine the subject of the research (in our case it is the local community). Then they draw a table which consists of four cells, each of them has a name (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). See Table 3, where you can see the work in the Byhov district in Mogilev region as an example. The most important part of the SWOT-analysis is the brain storming during which the participants offer, discuss and insert characteristics of the research area in the table.

*Table 3: SWOT analysis of the Byhov district sustainable development perspectives*⁶

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historical heritage: the castle of Sapega, Grudnikovka (the park, the farm, the lake), Barkolabovsk field, the icon, the synagogue - Geographical situation - Water potential (the Dnepr river, Chigirinsk reservoir, the Drut river) - Large forest area (45% of the territory) - Moderate degree of radioactive pollution - Motivation for sustainable development - Transport infrastructure - 60% provision with local fuel resources - Cooperation with foreign investors, private business (BelATMIT, ASKO enterprises) - Availability of industrial plants, working with their own raw materials - Availability of local fuel resources (the reserves of peat are enough for 30 – 35 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ageing of population - Radioactive pollution - Emigration of youth - Low developed industry - Absence of local NGOs - Absence of local self-government - Low development of agricultural businesses - Lack of development in tourism and rural tourism - Absence of universities' branches - Low connectivity with the Internet - Undeveloped hotel business - Unprofitable military town - Agriculture in its present form - Insufficient financing - Lack of qualified staff

⁵ See the decoded abbreviation in the glossary.

⁶ SWOT analysis was made on the April 11th, 2006 under the agenda of the expert seminar "Formation of strategies for sustainable development in post Chernobyl territories" in the Byhov town.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Deep processing of wood – Use of historical and nature potential of the district – Renewal of recreation centres' work (including week-end recreation centres) – Use of renewable energy resources (wind farms, water energy) – Availability of an airdrome – International cooperation (development of twinning with foreign towns for development of LA21) – Attraction of former residents for development of the district (living abroad) – Development of tourism, especially water tourism (the Dnepr River, the Chigirinka River, the Drut River), eco and agro tourism, extreme tourism, creation of the route "Byhov – Barkolabovo – Grudinovka" – Development of local folk handicrafts and trades – Redesign of the local alcohol plant – Use of the military town's infrastructure and potential – Development of roadside service – Building of a railway station – Production and processing of agricultural products – A sports palace – Cultural events (traditional festivals) – Development of fishing – Creation of universities' branches and scientific research institute departments – Awarding the castle 'national important monument' status – Building of a beautiful embankment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Floods – Fires – Demographic situation – Lack of financial resources – Use of local fuel resources (radioactive pollution through ashes) – Instability of the legal base – Ecology (consequences of Chernobyl catastrophe, "legacy" of the military town)

The community is often viewed on the basis of strengths, then weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Sometimes, when there are too many participants, it is better to divide them and form several working groups, who will work with the SWOT analysis independently. Then the working groups share the results of their work and insert them into the common table. At the end it is recommended to prioritise the listed factors depending on the severity of problems and importance of tasks. The ensuing analysis of the priorities areas becomes important support for planning of the area's development strategy.

Development of the VISION (picture of the desired future) of the local community is an important part of Local Agenda 21. While developing a *vision* it is important to ground oneself in the major

principles of sustainable development, to show the diversity of a specific local community and its possible contribution in achievement of sustainable development aims in the global context. The period, during which it is planned to achieve the aim, is based on the wishes of the LAG participants. As a rule these are 10 to 15 or 20 years. Usually during the round table after the SWOT-analysis the LAG members are divided into small groups; and each of them, for a small period of time (usually 45 to 60 minutes), expands on its own input to the community *vision*. Then the groups share the results of their work, and on the basis of the results a common *vision* statement is chosen. Informing local people about the results of the LAG work is a very important criterion for success. The information about the LAG work has to be widely available, so that all interested community members can take part in discussing the documents. The easiest form of passing on information about the process of Local Agenda is a stand with regularly renewed materials which could be situated in a place available to many people.



Solar panels on roofs are a part of the vision for a sustainable settlement

While developing the *vision* it is important to be realistic about its achievability, taking into account the available and possible resources. Experts from Estonia, while discussing this question, determined the place of their small country in the solution to global problems: “We cannot be important partners in forming global oil

prices. Because of the weakness of our state we will not be able to have an influence on world questions connected with human rights as we would like to. But we have the opportunity to be pioneers in the creation of a balanced ecosystem society. Ecosystem planning, introduction of corresponding laws and eco technologies could be

one of the successful ways for the development of Estonia in the 21st century”⁷. The formulation of the *vision* must be ultimately achievable.

Development of the action plan is based on the results of the previous stages of work. It would be advisable to use available ideas from local governments, deputies, local public organisations, and NGOs in the work of the plan. The plan must include the following parts:

- Strategy of work
- Actions
- Timeframe
- Persons / organisations responsible for actions
- Resources and their sources
- Indicators for monitoring implementation of the plan.

It is important to avoid uncertain or very complicated parts in the plan. All actions must be clear to the majority of community members, which will encourage greater participation by more people in Local Agenda 21. The control over the plan implementation has to be a regular agenda item at meetings of the LAG members. If necessary, plans must be updated, taking into account new conditions and opportunities. Experience of implementing Local Agenda 21 has shown the systemic planning process to be suitable. This is where the plan represents a system of projects, directed to common goals for societal development. At the initial stage of Local Agenda 21 it is better to begin with small and uncomplicated projects, the implementation of which can show community members the effectiveness of the new initiative and strengthen confidence in the power of the LAG participants. When you have collected more experience, you can begin with more complicated projects.

Organisation of thematic working groups. This organisational form of work has shown its effectiveness for the implementation of local community solutions to problems at different times and in different countries. It is advisable to include representatives of the state, public organisations, NGOs, businesses, and other groups of society in the working groups. Moreover, it is necessary to try to

⁷ Vatk, J. Kuldna, P. and Oja A. (2001) *Local Agenda 21*. Tallinn: SEI: P. 12.

attract experts from scientific research institutes and universities to take part in the working groups. The quantity of working group participants is determined by the LAG participants, based upon the size of local society problems, strategic priorities and availability of resources for its implementation. There are examples in Turkey, where large Local Agenda 21 projects were developed. In some Turkish towns up to 40 working groups were created to solve the local problems. The group work has to be interesting for the participants. It is good when this work coincides with hobbies or professional interests of participants. During my visit to Germany I heard about a small town, under the auspices of Local Agenda 21, who created a working group for searching for underground passages between old castles, which are situated in this area. Students of local culture, archaeologists and schoolchildren took part in the work. As a result the interest of tourists to this area increased, and local businessmen received extra opportunities to earn money by providing services for them.

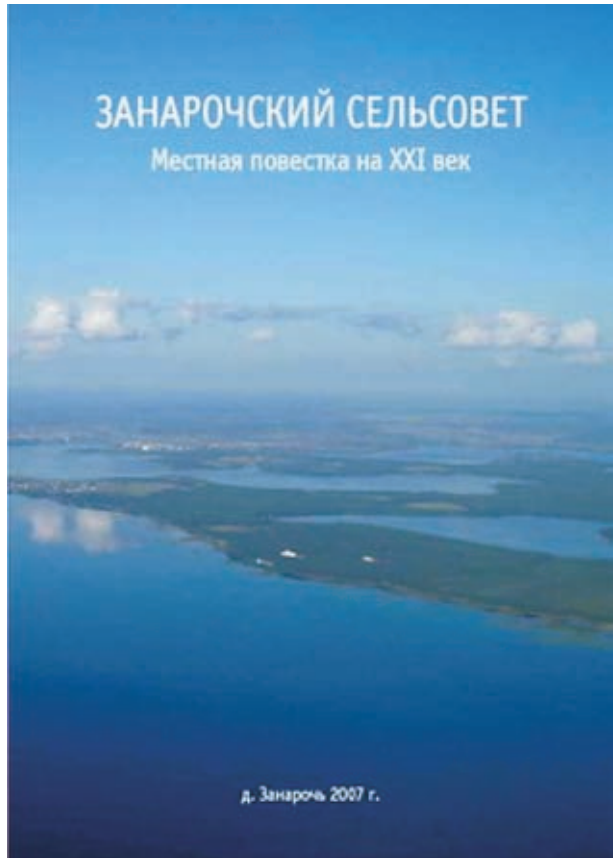
Integration of LA21 in the local legislation is a very important criterion for success. Local authorities are interested in use of analytical materials and recommendations of experts about the development of a certain district or town, village or local area. It helps to increase the validity of resolutions, avoid mistakes and prevent the appearance of problems. Taking into account opinions from the active part of society while planning and forecasting development of territories helps to avoid conflicts, direct the energy of “informal leaders” to solution of the local community problems (sometimes even people who come with complaints to the Executive Committee). Ways in which the LA21 can be introduction into the system of local legislation are as follows:

- Approval of LA21 in sessions of the executive committee
- Approval of LA21 in sessions of deputy Councils
- Including of LA21 into the area development plans as a component part
- Reflection of the fact that LA21 was discussed and approved in meeting minutes of commissions, Councils, administrations, departments and other working parties of local authorities (fully or partially).

Other possible actions that can strengthen the status and influence (and opportunities) of Local Agenda are:

- Letters from authority representatives (heads of executive committees, deputy Councils, ministries, departments), in which the LA21 development is regarded as very important and which include recommendations on how to work with subordinate state structures.
- Positive expressions of support for the Local Agenda 21 by authority representatives published in the press, booklets and brochures.
- Articles and press releases in the mass media where the participation of state and local authorities and their positive stance to LA21 is shown.

Publication of the Local Agenda 21 in the local press or as a separate publication is a good opportunity to make the local community aware of the LA21 content, and to attract new participants into the work. In the case of the LA21 publication as a separate brochure or book it is possible to give it a marketing focus while publishing photos of points of interest, addresses of hotels, agro tourism farms etc. In this case it is possible to attract resources from local businesses for the publication of LA21. Col-



Local Agenda 21 of Zanaroch village area

leagues from Poland told us about their experience, when the brochure of Local Agenda 21 was combined with a workbook, where additions and new ideas could be introduced and certain sections could be completed. The publication of Local Agenda 21 can be a good reason to ask international and foreign programmes and projects for financial help. If resources are available, it is advisable to issue LA21 in English, which opens up possibilities of finding new partners not only in Belarus, but also abroad. LA21 can be published in English as an abbreviated version as was done with the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Belarus to 2020 and when publishing the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of Minsk to 2020. If there are not enough resources, it is important to insert a pull-out summary in English at the end of the publication as was the case with the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of Disna County.

Publication of the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Disna County with coloured illustrations, card-insets, photos of local places of interest, chronology of the Local Agenda 21 and addresses of agro tourism farms in 2005 with financial help of the UNDP had a great effect. The representatives of Disna region noted that with the help of this book they could draw attention of the regional authorities to their county, which is far away from the regional centre, and establish contacts with the Marketing Centre of Vitebsk. As a result Disna, the smallest official town in Belarus, and even not a district centre (yet!), was chosen as the place for the allocation of a regional centre for sustainable development and rural business undertakings and will serve 3 districts: Miorski, Braslavski and Sharkovschinski. Also after the publication of this book with the strategy of local development, Disna established relations with partners from Sweden. Together they prepare a tourist route project: "Sweden – Riga – Daugavpils – Disna – Polotsk"⁸. The Programme of Small Grants of the Global Environmental Facilities supported a project in Disna, intended to reduce the pollution of the rivers Disna and Zapadnaja Dvina. The number of Belarusians and foreigners, who come to have a rest with the hospitable residents of Disna County, has increased. The phone rings more often and the doors of

⁸ Editor's Note: Sweden through Latvia to Belarus.

the town Council are open: potential investors hurry to “peg” their commercial projects in Disna (in Chapter 9 you can find out more detailed results of the Local Agenda 21 in Disna County).

Implementation of Local Agenda 21 is its major concept and goal. When the most active members of the local community are educated, problems are found, strategies are determined and actions are suggested, the time of real action comes. It is important that the period between the so called “theoretical part” and achievement of the first results is not too long. In such a situation, the doubters’ views can get stronger, the external conditions can change from favourable to unfavourable and the enthusiasm of leaders can cool down. That is why people have to see early positive changes happening because of Local Agenda 21. They can be small improvements, which can be done without the requirement for large resources. While working towards the vision, working with the strategic priority areas of the plan, it is important to design synchronically, as Carlos Castaneda said in one of his works, “objects of power”.



Local Food Festival in Motol village

Small successful projects like the creation of a beautiful flower-bed or of an alpine hill in place of a desert or a dump, organisation of an information stand on sustainable development in the local library, joint planting of trees in a new street, holding of a new holiday or festival (and declaring it as regular), opening of a new exhibit in the museum all can be a visible beginning to the Local Agenda 21 work. While informing people about such actions, it is important to stress that results have been achieved as part of the Local Agenda 21 of a district, town or village. This approach will

help form positive perceptions of Local Agenda 21 by community members. It will stimulate their participation in different events under the aegis of LA21 and it will create an understanding that the completed work is systemic and long term.

Monitoring of work results is needed to correlate expenses and results, to search for ways to increase effectiveness of work and for the acceptance of decisions about the amendment of plans and actions. For monitoring it is better to use a set of indicators which show the changes and records actual results. The problem of indicators for sustainable development is unsolved and widely discussed. There are multiple requirements of the indicators for understanding sustainable development. Several groups of indicators and directions for further academic research in the area are explored. The idea about the necessity of using institutional indicators alongside with economic, environmental and social indicators adds interest to the subject. Eleonora Gvozdeva, the first expert who studied the problems of sustainable development indicators in Belarus, mentions: “Institutional indicators show if there is a mechanism for decision making in accordance with the sustainable development strategy (for example: the aim – complex approach for decision making, the indicator – quantity of joint commissions, business and public organisations, local authorities for decision making; the aim – strengthening of the civil society, the indicator – the participation percentage and the number of free associations, quantity of programmes and courses for sustainable development and quantity of people involved in the education, etc)”. Examination of some thematic aspects of sustainable development in Belarus gives an opportunity to offer a number of indicators, which can also be used at the local level:

- “Improvement of the educational system on environmental issues. Possible indicators are: percentage of schools where sustainable development and ecology are studied as subjects; percentage of families who use the principles of energy saving (and others) in their private life.

⁹ Strategy of sustainable development of Belarus: Continuity and update (2003) An analytical report. Minsk: Unipak. P. 21.

- Stirring up of public activity for preservation of environment, which is suitable for life. Possible indicators are: percentage of people who take part in environmental projects; percentage of on-air broadcasts (on TV) devoted to environmental problems; number of local councils for sustainable development” (p. 22).

Indicators of sustainable development used at a local level can be qualitative and quantitative, absolute and relative. Using different kinds of indicators will enhance the richness of the picture and give it integrity.

At the local level, in a town or village, sustainability indicators have to be simple and understandable for inhabitants. Once I asked Nikolai Artiushko, the Chairman of the Turow Executive Committee, which indicator he would use to show positive changes in the town. He thought a little and said: “This year we have taken one more class of children in our school than in the previous year”. I think it is a very vivid indicator. In Fanipol town, during a meeting of the Club for Sustainable Development during discussion on the question of indicators, the opinion was expressed, that the average age of inhabitants shows the sustainability of local community development. “We have a lot of youth in Fanipol. We are the youngest town of Belarus!” local inhabitants said proudly.

Life expectancy, sicknesses rates, percentage of green zones in towns, biodiversity, air, soil and water pollution, quantity of small companies, level of unemployment and criminality – these indicators are understandable and congruent for everyone. These indices can be used to show the elimination of certain negative events and processes or to support positive development tendencies. Trends in sickness rate and mortality reasons in the able-bodied age group, quantity of sulphur in the air and heavy metals in the ground, presence or absence (disappearance) of certain flora and fauna species in a given area, average duration of unemployment are examples of such indicators.

In the Ukrainian town Donetsk in 2002 the project “Rose of Winds” happened. Under the framework of this project a set of sustainable development indicators for the town was developed. Analysis of

situational changes by indicators was achieved through interviewing people in the town. On the basis of its results an information brochure was prepared and distributed.

This is the list of thematic blocks and indicators, used by Ukrainian colleges:

Quality of air	Quantity of harmful substances removed per inhabitant
Quality of water	Average number of leaks in the city water supply systems repaired (per month)
Recreational facilities	Number of children's playgrounds in communal gardens
Solid domestic waste	Provision of waste collecting techniques. Volume of fly tips removed compared with the total volume of fly tips
Illnesses	Number of children at birth with congenital illness per thousand
Social activity	Number of non government organisations in the city
Unemployment	Unemployment rate
Children homelessness, vagrancy	Percentage of homeless children compared with the total number of children under 18 years of age
Criminality	Number of crimes per 10,000 inhabitants (all kinds of crimes)
Use of resources, energy saving	Number of meters for cold and hot water installed in flats
Level of income	Percentage of people living below the minimum wage
Availability of flats	Correlation of the price for one square meter of living space to the average wage
Public transport	Number of public transport units per 10,000 inhabitants. Specific density of public transport in the total quantity of motor transport
From: Booklet "Indicators for sustainable development of the town Donetsk". Donetsk, 2002.	

Recently the Ecological (or environmental) Footprint indicator has been used more and more for analysis of sustainable development¹⁰. Calculations of the Ecological Footprint based on a great quantity of statistic data from different spheres of life help to appreciate the

¹⁰ In the preparation of this text information from the following websites were used: www.ecofoot.net , <http://www.la21.nw.ru/footprint/index.htm> , <http://globalchange.at/ru/main/ru.htm> , <http://www.myfootprint.org>

“pressure” of man on nature. Many indices are combined on the basis of connections between each other, and the calculated result is represented as acres of land and water resources which are necessary for the production of resources and recycling of waste products from the activity of a certain group of people. This means that the portion of biological productivity of the Earth (dry land or reservoir) which is needed for the regeneration of losses, deposited on the planet by one man, town, country or by the whole humanity is understood. Sometimes this indicator is expressed by the quantity of time (as a

rule, years), which the Earth needs to reproduce resources, which were used and disturbed by people or communities together with utilized waste products produced during the year.

According to the available understanding, the Ecological Footprint is now discussed on more than 40 000 websites and on the pages of thousands of printed documents. It is used by international organisations, governments of many countries, by municipalities of towns. For example, the Agency for Environment of Australia and

The association of the micro-region municipalities Pod Panskim Delom in Slovakia used the following indicators to determine the success of their LA21:

Quantitative indicators:

- Participation of not less than 20 people in every municipal meeting
- Creation of initiative groups in every municipality or group of municipalities
- Creation of Local Action Groups for sustainable development
- Development of a sustainable development strategy for the micro-region
- Development of an action plan for the micro-region
- Implementation of 10 projects for sustainable development, including 3 commercial (with use of local resources), 2 projects aligned to the protection of environment, and 3 projects aligned to landscape management and improvement of the appearance of municipalities.

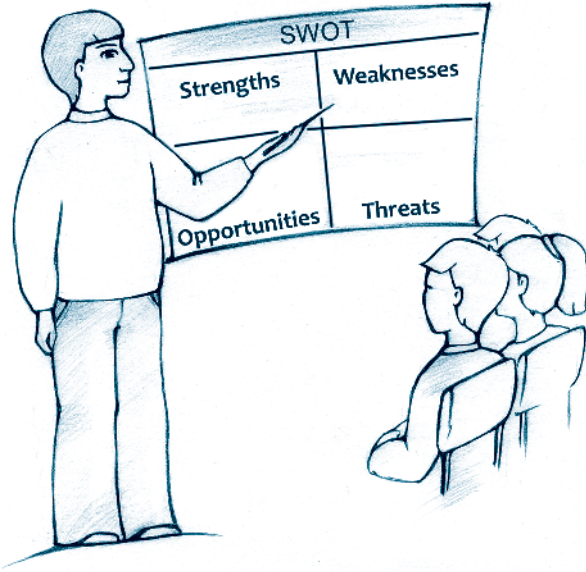
Qualitative indexes:

- Involvement of people in the life of municipalities, creation of conditions for cooperation
- Creation of partnerships, cooperation in preparing documents and projects
- Increase in knowledge of inhabitants and widening of public awareness
- Creation of an information base about the micro-region
- Creation of new business opportunities
- Improvement of the quality of life in the micro-region.

From: Mederley, P. (2004) Local Agenda 21. Methodological manual based on experiences from Slovakia. Bratislava: Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe.

the Government of Wales has chosen the Environmental Footprint as the major index for sustainable development.

For the purpose of creating a strong and influential community of partnership organisations, which use calculations of the Ecological



Footprint, introduction of new public standards and their permanent improvement, the Ecological Footprint Network was created (www.ecofoot.net). New easier methods (calculators) of the Ecological Footprint were developed, which allow, after answering 15 simple questions, you to understand and compare your Ecological Footprint with the one used by oth-

ers, and with the resources, which our planet provides (<http://www.myfootprint.org>).

It seems that use of the Ecological Footprint as the indicator of sustainable development of local communities is very promising, as it has a number of valuable qualities:

- It has been studied theoretically and in-depth
- It can be easily calculated and appreciated
- It can be used for decision making on different levels from individual to global
- It is understandable and is eye catching which induces people to undertake joint and personal actions, directed at minimizing harmful human influence on nature.

Amendment of Local Agenda 21 happens taking into account actual results and changed circumstances. If it is necessary to change

the plan strategies or actions it is advisable to return to Point 4 of Figure 3, and begin with the renewal of information about the area and its analysis. Therefore we continue according to the previous scheme, moving to a new cycle of work.

4. BASIC PRINCIPLES, MEANS AND MECHANISMS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL AGENDA 21

The sequence of actions for the development and implementation of LA described in the previous chapter may be figuratively presented as the skeleton of a living creature, which will not become truly alive without the necessary life organs, muscles, skin, blood, etc. So, with regard to this metaphor, even when fully formed, the living creature must acquire a lot of skills and knowledge necessary for survival and prosperity. In this chapter we will examine similar processes for LA. The following principles of sustainable development are reflected in international and national documents and also in academic recommendations. The author has generalised existing materials on LA21, systematized them and concluded on the basis of personal experience in research and project activities. Despite the availability of certain principles, then applying rational effective resources, producing and actioning the process of effective decision making, you still have to be ready for problems. Nobody promises you an easy route to walk, but, equipped by modern tools, you will overcome both mountain ridges and impassable swamps without any problems and you will reach the desired goal. We will begin with the goal itself.

A comprehensive approach “Start with the goal”

One of the main advantages of LA and other similar methods used for achieving sustainable development of local communities is the comprehensive approach for their implementation. This is the difference from other correct and well founded, but separate and unconnected plans and programmes, which higher authorities force local Councils and executive bodies, administrations of enterprises and establishments to develop in great numbers. LA allows the systemic bringing together of these documents, removing duplication that can create parts which do not work effectively together, and this can considerably strengthen the effectiveness of the overall work.

Separate, one off, strictly specialised actions are not enough now for achieving access to resources in the intensely competitive environment that currently exists for these resources. The systemic combination of measures in LA21 addressing the needs of economic, environmental and social approaches (details will follow), forming a single strategy, combining all plans, programmes and separate types of work, provides a synergetic effect. Thus a greater result can be drawn at less expense.

In the preface to the Municipal economic programme “Combined initiatives for the development of a market infrastructure for Nizhniy Novgorod city” (Russia), Mayor of the city Lebedev U.E. wrote: “There is growing awareness that we must not confine ourselves by “breaches” to separate directions of socio-economic reform. Valuable development of a city can be obtained only as a result of systemic activity, allowing the defining of priorities, distributing efforts correctly and expending limited resources rationally”¹.

The approach which has been called “Start with the goal” will help in providing the principle of complexity. The vision of the desired future is not simply a beautiful slogan, inspiring and informing the Local Action Group and all the local community about the grandiose tasks of LA. It is a very important instrument for effectively working within the framework of LA, the standard and the philosophy from which to prioritise plans, decisions and actions.



Belarusian experts studying German experiences of ecological management

¹ Municipal economic programs of the cities of Nizhniy Novgorod, Saratov and Yaroslavl. (1999) Moscow: Fond Institute of Urban Economy. P. 10.

Does achievement of this bring us to the general goal? Is this action most effective for moving us towards the goal? What needs to be done if circumstances change and movement towards the general goal proceeds faster than expected? Answers to these questions and subsequent action in accordance with accepted decisions help to achieve maximum efficiency for LA.

Routine... Answers for “burning” questions... “I will not engage with little things quickly but will engage when you get to the main issues”. These “time-wasters” are well known. In the execution of LA it is necessary to try concentrating on another approach – a strategic one, when all participants of LA21 have a primary objective. Achieving of this is an unquestionable priority for the work.

You have to delegate routine tasks to less skilled people, rather than use unproductive time for it. Concentrate on the key issues. Take pains on the completion of strategic business. Bring the maximum amount of partners to the decision making. Use all your possible resources. And again record decisions diligently. Remember the saying: “To the ship, which does not know, what harbour he goes to, there is no favouring wind.”

The combination of economic, environmental and social approaches

“Who use these approaches separately?” asks the astute opponent. And “in general, who talks about any approaches? Everybody simply carries on with their own business”. And “this is how academic-authors earn a crust.”

“Everybody simply carries on with their own business.” This is where the root of the problem lies. One government department is engaged in the development of industry; another in agriculture, a third in health services, the fourth, environmental protection. As a result, there is not an answer to the question “Who is responsible for the quality of life in towns and rural areas?” It is like one comic asked “Who made this suit?” and got the answer: “I did the buttons. Is there something wrong with buttons?”

Obviously to answer the question (who is responsible for the quality of life in towns and rural areas?) it would be better, if there was an established local government and self-governance with good financial opportunities in municipalities in Belarus; if substantial quantities of taxes remained at the disposal of municipalities (as is the case in most economically developed countries); and the system of expenses involved in the collection of taxes was transparent and controlled. This is inevitable in the future. However there is a very poor record of these actions taken to reform the country, in spite of the fact that the apparent slow moving nature of reforms to increase the efficiency of public resources usage are enormous.

However let us examine opportunities for getting the best from combining environmental, social and economic approaches to decision-making for local development, because it is precisely at the local level that these opportunities are most clear and noticeable.

Let us look at a negative example. Deforestation or draining swamps, contaminating rivers and lakes (*environmental effect*), caused by careless authorities or managers who deprive the local population of sources of profits (*economic effect*) such as mushrooms, berries and fish. The attractiveness of the location goes down in these areas and young people begin to depart for the cities giving a *social* problem.

Next we will look at a positive example. In a small town or village small farmers begin to get tourists visiting their farm gate stalls which bring them additional profits (*economic effect*). Because the arrival of tourists depends on the state of a river, the forest and the presence in them of animals and birds, the community begins to protect the environment, helps to save wild animals and rare plants (*environmental effect*). It is very prestigious to be the head of a farm that gives superior benefit to the environment. So people don't rush to leave such places; as a result the opportunity for their self-confidence to increasing is improved (*social effect*).

Here is another positive example. It has already been noted that an important element of the social part of development is the opportunity to be involved in the local, regional or national governance.

When a person is sure that his or her voice will be listened to (*social pre-condition*) about the decision making concerning the local environment (forests, lakes, groves) next to their house, they will protect it (*environmental effect*). As a result the natural potential



Sustainable practice. Using local resources

of this area is saved and possibly increased. It will create conditions for additional earning opportunities (*economic effect*) of this person because of the gifts of nature and opportunity for establishing agricultural tourism.

When visiting one of the small towns of Germany, we noticed

work on the reconstruction of the city area. They took away tarmac from the square and put down cobble stones. “It will reduce the necessity for a storm water drainage system” – the guide explained to us. Now let’s count up the types of effects this has:

- Economy of the storm water drainage system (during rain some water will leach into the ground).
- You don’t have to breathe in tarmac fumes on hot days, which is positive for the health of the community.
- The paved square will create a pleasant atmosphere for the recreation of the local residents (social effect).
- The impression of “old age” will attract tourists (bringing profits to local businesses).
- It is possible to assume that local stone will be used for paving the square (maximum use of local resources – one of the rules of transport to regulate development, because of the environmental damaged caused by transport – air miles and road miles).
- Labour of local specialist artisans will be used who will get salaries and the local budget receives extra taxes.

- At the weekends such a large area can become a pedestrian area or a place for fairs and fetes, that encourages rallying of the local community, forming a sense of pride for the local neighbourhood, renewal and development of traditional cultural and historical events (as well as the economic effects).

In the Centre for Alternative Technologies in Wales, the pond, which is a reservoir where rain-water is collected, has several functions such as:

- Decoration of the park
- Water is used for watering plants
- Water is used for other economic needs (for example rest rooms)
- Water is used for running the water-balanced cliff railway which takes visitors up a cliff and back
- Fish are bred in the lake.

New technology (as well as old forgotten ones) contains considerable potential to combine economic, environmental and social aims. Composting of household waste helps alleviate environmental problems and gives a highly efficient fertilizer which enhances harvests on small holdings. Separate collection of waste and organisation according to their utilisation (for recycling) as well as having an environmental effect can bring an economic return. The competition between the owners of farmsteads to get the best results in this work will create stimuli, public approval and positive images of leaders



Studying sustainable practices. Nicola Swan and Aleg Sivagrakau at the Centre for Alternative Technologies, Wales at the base of the water-balanced cliff railway

which are important social pre-conditions for further improvements.

Partnership

In the development and achievement of LA21 and other similar initiatives directed towards sustainable development of local communities, partnership is a major principle. Agenda 21 rates the issues of collaboration, partnership and co-ordination with the different actors in the sustainable development process at international, regional, national and local levels as the most effective tools for changes, by making them an essential part of the implementation of most tasks and measures. Such a high level of belief in the partnership potential is not accidental. Many of the situations around the world around local development, characterised by instability, arose precisely because of the absence of partnerships. For overcoming this instability partnership can play an important role.

There was a report "We the people: civil society, the United Nations and Global Governance," prepared by the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations – Civil Society Relations Group on the question of relations between the United Nations and civil society, which was accepted as an official record of the General Assembly of the UN in June, 2004. It was noted that partnership had become a mantra for the times. "Evidence to support multi-stakeholder partnerships came from the local level as successes emerged, such as local Agenda 21 initiatives, in thousands of communities. A key lesson was that complex issues were solvable and difficult targets achievable if a broad range of actors contributed to all stages of the effort. This demands linking local efforts to global goals, sharing resources and fostering joint ownership of both the failures and the successes."

Source: www.un-ngls.org

Community development in Belarus carries the legacy of long years of oppression of human rights and dissent. Despite the Magdeburg Right² in medieval times Belarusian towns and cities have not acquired the same degree of economic and political freedom to date. Getting through many decades of imperial

policy of Russia tsarist and communist regimes, wars, the Belarusian people lost their abilities for self-governance. Stereotypes of behaviour have been built based on passivity, conforming, mistrust

² Editor's note: The right to hold trade exhibits first given to a German city in 1035 which later led to a suite of city laws.

and suspiciousness, patience and the taciturn approval of decisions of people in authority. The legal status afforded modern Belarusian legislation, proclaims the establishment of local self-government, but it has not happened in reality. These circumstances complicate the processes of planning and establishing partnerships with different local communities' "players"; at the same time it makes this task essential.

The creation of Local Action Groups for the development and implementation of LA21 is a concrete form of the partnership principle. Teamwork of local public agents, business and NGOs establishes the groundwork for more effective decision for LA21 tasks. An executive committee will provide the communication network, business will support resources and civil society will take an active part. As a result greater output is achieved than from the individual parts working separately.

It is calculated by the specialists from Great Britain, that if all non-commercial organisations were to close overnight, the national government would have to increase taxes by 13% in order to cover the social work which is currently performed by the NCOs today. Thus NCOs, as a rule, are more flexible and more effective at working out social problems, compared with national government, because they are formed by and work for their 'clients'³.

For the maintenance of an atmosphere conducive to forming partnerships the followings conditions are important:

- Equality of participants and mutual respect
- Openness of decision making and distribution of information
- Follow up on all actions arising from decisions
- Possibility of self achievement for participants
- A mutual enriching information exchange and experience.

Participation in Local Action Groups or in other similar organisation (councils of sustainable development, offices of LA21, etc.), of state and public structures and experts from different organisations allows the provision of a diversity of views when discussing issues

³ Quotation from: Zhurakovsky, V. (2006) Financial stability of NGOs in the Belarusian way. IN *Internet newsletter of the "Act" NGO*. [Online].

and making decisions. However in reality this practice is not always observed. So, analysing the composition of the Public Council for achieving the “Strategic Plan for Minsk City sustainable development for the period to 2020”, unfortunately, it is necessary to say that only for the point of principle is it possible to call it public. Eighty percent of participants who were present (and mainly were the leaders) were from one or other state structures of Mingorispolkom (Executive Committee of Minsk City Council of Deputies) or from the district administration of Minsk. The other 20% of councillors were also from state organisations or were financially and politically dependent upon the state organisations. Possibly this situation is explainable; the state structures (in this case – Mingorispolkom) until then did not have any positive experiences from engaging in partnerships with independent organisations and experts. So they have only taken a few steps in this direction and that is why they are so conservative.



Festival of flowers in Zheludok town

However this circumstance can have negative consequences both for the achievement of the Strategic Plan and in its subsequent revision and redevelopment. A direct administrative directive or substantial dependence of councillors on the chief will hinder the openness of discussions, criticism and

expression of alternative points of view. It can substantially reduce the efficiency of work within the strategic framework.

Insufficient (or unnoticeable) potential may be another reason why the local authorities can not “see” that NGOs are a useful partner for working on LA21. Therefore it is important to strengthen and

demonstrate this potential. This type of work was conducted under the framework of the UNDP project for the development of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development for the Republic of Belarus to 2020 (see Chapter 5). On the whole, experience confirms the benefit of involving public organisations and business in the process of LA21.

In our view, equal quantities of four basic groups of representatives are the best formula for the LA21 Public Councils:

- State structures
- Business
- Non governmental organisations, political parties and trade unions
- Scientific associations, institutes of research and universities.

The number of partnerships to include in the process of LA21 is only limited by the extent of your Local Action Group. It is necessary to work towards the introduction of this principle in relationships with any people and organisations. There is a large potential for development, for example, in establishing relationships with international and foreign organisations, enterprises, communities and individual citizens. “Success is teamwork!” The proof of this claim is tested by time.

Communication and transparency

Sometimes an element of secrecy can be thought to promoted interest. Because of this approach, it is said, the potato spread to several European countries. But, apparently, this example is the exception that proves the rule. Therefore during the process of LA21 it is recommended to have maximum communication and transparency. It will enable new participants and new resources to join the process of local development.

Informing the community about the progress of LA21 work must become a habit. For this reason it is expedient to have someone who is directly accountable for this activity in the LAG. Creation and use of distinct logo for your LAG will help news on your events and progress grab the attention of the community. Distribution of

information about LA21 through mass media, stands, booklets, brochures, leaflets, Internet sites and souvenirs will make your work more visible. Keeping a thorough “project history” will create a reputation for your action group and the local community as an effective team and reliable partner (similar to having a “credit history” in a bank it will help in future work).

Transparency in decision making is created by allowing all interested parties to have a say at LAG meetings; placing of minutes of meetings or abbreviated records of meetings with all of the important decisions on a website or on an information stand in a convenient place for the general population to access. Voting on important questions, election of leaders of groups and delegates for journeys (for example to other communities) are also elements of transparency strengthening the trust the population will have in LA21.

Pilot projects

This recommendation is relevant, mainly to the cases, when an organisation or authority is planning to take on the work of LA21 in a large territory with many local communities. It is expedient in this case to carry out a “pilot project” for the planning and implementation of a sustainable development project at a local level first. Starting in specially chosen local communities accords with approved methods of development under LA21.

This approach decreases the risk of possible failure of this undertaking by virtue of specific circumstances. An example of the risk is, at the beginning of the work on LA21 it could coincide with the start of problems with the supply of heat or water; a reform minded Mayor of the town can easily be ‘moved’ by a less interested official; the public organisation, initiating the process of LA21 or supporting it, can be put out of existence. These and other similar events can become reasons which will mean that the initiative may not be welcomed. In this case a small scale project (pilot) and spreading the risk will protect the new undertaking from damaging its reputation of in the eyes of population and authorities.

At the same time a piloting approach allows you to concentrate greater efforts in specific places, to support the diversity of local communities because finances and expert resources are concentrated it gives quick wins in local communities. As an analogy of the pilot approach to development, we can conduct



At the local festival in Komarovo village

the harvest Dozhinki holiday in different towns in Belarus each year and that town receives state financing for infrastructure of these communities.

Practical experience of work through LA21 is the most persuasive argument for taking such approaches in other places, their replication. For most people it is more important to see (and to touch!) than to hear or read about achievements. In addition, what local players say about the achievement of local sustainable development strategies are often greeted by people with greater trust, than reading recommendations from “How-to-do” books and hearing “theoretical” stories from consultants.

It is important for the new participants engaged in work on LA21 for the first time, to see that practical outcomes are attained in your average Belarusian small town or district, instead of somewhere far away in a economically rich and prosperous foreign country. It is also important that these results are shown to be the activity of everyday people and that other people can easily do the same.

The demonstration effect of pilot projects gives confidence to those who are hesitant and decreases the fears of public administrators at a local level concerning the possible negative attitude of the higher authorities towards the work. “Here, look, some district X

developed LA21 and the district authorities only got praise from the community and from government!”, “The Minsk City Executive Committee confirmed the Strategic plan of sustainable development to 2020 and our community and district should follow suit and not fall behind!” these sayings are giving strength to the argument for many officials at the district level now.

Success of LA21 gained in local communities from pilots can be effectively applied elsewhere. Delegations of representatives journeying from other cities and districts with the media are organised to places where positive results are achieved within the framework of LA21, information about this experience spreads in brochures, booklets, and also through lectures, seminars, conferences and training events; all are used to spread the word.

Implementation of a pilot approach in LA21 presupposes incremental achievement of the stages of work, reflected in chapter 3.

For development of LA21 pilots the criteria for choosing local communities become:

- Personal interest of the local administration to participate in the LA21 development. It is important, that this personal interest is real support for this activity, for example as the programme forms or for separate measures; the grant of apartments for informative and teaching events and so on.
- A presence in the local community of a public organisation, initiative or leaders, capable and expressing a desire to join LA21. Participating in work on LA21 of active representatives of civil society, insistently working on the subject of sustainable development, knowledgeable about local affairs, enjoying the confidence of the local population and able to cooperate with local public agents are the major pre-conditions of success of such an undertaking.
- Economic feasibility for communication, including the Internet.
- Unity of local community, not implying (or not necessarily implying) that it belonging to one administrative territorial unit but that there is a clear perception by the population, based on traditional, historical, socio-economic and geographical features, durability of connections between the members of the

community and a unity of problems and achievements that they are a community. Turow's area and Disna County are examples of such communities the scopes of which do not coincide with a modern administrative territorial division of the country.

- Relatively problem free socio-economic situation in the local community. This criterion is offered because of the need, as noted before, for the pilot district, city or other settlement achieving a positive result for the subsequent distribution of experience.
- Previous acquaintance of local administration and local activists with the sustainable development concept and experience of participating in projects on the local community's development. This circumstance allows accelerating the LA21 course, decreasing the expenses of resources on information teaching events. Participating of civil society and public agents in previous seminars, round tables, conferences, study tours in Belarus and in foreign countries on the subject of sustainable development testifies both about the activity of local community and preparedness to work. Previous project activity, as a rule, forms practical skills useful in work on LA21 and also gives confidence to its participants.
- The size of the population and area of territory or district or settlement in which it is planned to develop the sustainable development strategy is also taken into account at the selection of entities of pilot participants in the project. If it is a very large region, growth of expenses is related to the organisation of work. So, for example, the Polish experts⁴ recommend developing LA in communities with a quantity of no more than 50 thousand people and an area of no more than 300 to 400 sq. km. A very little object such as a small county, apartment house or school, can come forward as the "ground" for one of the projects of the pilot. An optimum decision will be a choice of different on size and area, presenting different types of local communities, i.e. typical projects. In this case possibilities broaden for work experience and its subsequent distribution.

⁴ Kistowski, M., Lenzion, J., Wiechowska, M., Wolniakowski, W. (1999) *How to Develop Agenda 21 in Gmina: Selected problems*. Part I. Gdansk. P. 12.

Some questions about strategy and tactics

American experts, Daniel Mazmanian and Paul Sabatier, have put forward a theory about how a public programme ought to be constructed in order to be implemented successfully. It ought to:

1. “Be clearly formulated and have a specified goal.
2. Be built on a correct assumption about cause and effect.
3. Provide the executor with sufficient legal means to realize the programme.
4. Be designed in such a way that the target group behaves as was intended.
5. Be entrusted to a competent and motivated management group.
6. Have support from organisations representing the target group.
7. Have support from central politicians and officials.
8. Not come into conflict with other official programmes.
9. Not be realized if the socio-economic conditions are unfavourable.
10. Be provided with sufficient financial resources.
11. Be entrusted to official organisations which have a positive attitude to the programme.
12. Not be designed in such a way that comes into conflict with the judiciary”.⁵

It is possible to name many of these requirements as desirable rather than obligatory. If this list of requirements is observed, it is quite easy to execute the planned project. But the problem is that most projects in districts, cities and the counties of Belarus have to be carried out in difficult, unfavourable circumstances. Improvement of these circumstances and overcoming the present problems is the task of these projects. For example, the nuclear contamination of enormous areas of Belarus after Chernobyl is an objective reality whose overwhelming force does not prevent projects of sustainable development in these districts. Sustainable development strategies of Chernobyl contaminated areas can become effective tools for implementation of a scientific approach to their being solving. The same relates to providing financial resources. Most of the projects

⁵ Andersson, A. (1997) *A sustainable Baltic region. Session 10: From intention to action: Implementing sustainable development*. Uppsala and Amsterdam: Ditt Tryckeri. P. 11.

can not in any way be said to have sufficient financial resources. There are problems, related to misunderstanding of the essence and importance of work in the area of sustainable development from the point of view of the population and at times the local guidance. In the archive I keep the letter from one district Executive Committee, in which on receipt of a UNDP proposal about including this district in the work on LA21 development, a negative answer is given with reference to the point that this district is overwhelmed enough by implementation of the internal programmes.

On the example of the “Strategic plan of Minsk city sustainable development to 2020” it is possible to say that it has become an important milestone for the development of similar strategies that take account of principles and interests of development of the greater system (of which Minsk is only one of the elements).



Traditional Belarusian architecture is an important part of the opportunity for local sustainability

So, Minsk has an important part to play in the development of all Belarus and insufficient account of this

circumstance or only looking at internal interests can negatively influence the development of the large system (country) as a whole.

However there are inconsistencies for example, a point of reference about the continuation of the growth of population in Minsk in the “Strategic plan of Minsk city sustainable development to 2020” was stated as an “optimistic” prognosis (see p. 23), but in the forecast of the size of the population of Belarus made for the same year (2020), according to the “National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020”, is 9 million people (that is a decline of the size of the population); so the “optimism” of developers of the Minsk Strategic Plan has to be viewed sceptically. The result

of the Minsk strategy would be a concentration almost of a quarter of the population in one city with the simultaneous decline in size of other cities and towns, especially small and middle size ones and also the disappearance and depopulation of many rural areas.

In order not to repeat the inefficient scenario of spatial development of many economically developed countries where great efforts are now being made to remove the negative effects of outgrowth of city conurbations, it is expedient to predict measures to prevent (and it is still possible for a while!) a similar scenario for Belarus.

Thus in the strategy for Minsk city development it is sensible to trade in activities which would work against the general aims for development of the country as a whole, namely:

- To move part of the manufacturing and service industries, including educational, scientific and social institutions, to other areas with a grant for relocation when placing them in small and medium size towns and also in rural locality (especially – in depressed districts).
- To move the administrative agencies of the state (ministries, committees) and regional (of the Minsk Region) levels to other areas in Belarus.

These measures at the state level must be complemented by organisational and economic incentive: by reduction in taxes, reduction of tariffs on consumable resources (electricity, water and others) and by favourable mortgage systems for building housing, and business premises etc.

At the same time for the sake of sustainable development in Belarus a change of administrative-territorial structure of Belarus is expedient by way of breaking regions into smaller modern regional units and creation of a new territorial network based on no more than 15 – 20 cities (with the population over 100,000 people in each). The normal amount of districts (communities) has to increase to 250 – 300. There are a few grounded workings of this idea⁶ at the

⁶ The concept of reforming of local government and self-government in Belarus. (2003) Minsk: Institute of Economy National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. (In Russian).

present time and only political will remains to make it happen. The suggested reform of administrative-territorial structure has to be carried out alongside adopting a new legislation concerning local government and self-government. Within the framework of this legislation and the substantial expansion of jurisdictions increasing the level of competence of local authorities must be foreseen to ensure mechanisms to stimulate the work of Councils and Heads of local municipalities on behalf of development of local communities, accountability and responsibility of local authorities before electors, forming of new budgetary relations and strengthening of the economic independence of territories.

A personal interest in the complex development of territories unavoidably brings far-sighted leaders of local authorities into contact with different organisations and initiatives and the search of new (alternative) internal and external resources for working out vital problems. The support for public initiatives does not require additional financial or other expenses and can consist of a well disposed relationship, a kind word, help in getting a quick decision on what is frequently a simple question.



5. THE LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL BASES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN BELARUS

The possibility for LA21 development depends greatly on the degree of local self-government and it being based on the proper legislative acts. In addition, the regulatory fixing of the sustainable development concept at the national level creates an original “umbrella” which can protect the initiators of LA21 from criticism and counteractions. Consultations about local initiatives in the field of sustainable development conducted in many countries around the world on the eve of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, confirm this conclusion. «Early consultations for Johannesburg 2002 have shown us that local action works – but an effective national “enabling environment” is essential»¹ experts concluded.

Except legislative and other regulatory acts, other ‘Institutional’ bases for development of LA21 include:

- State authorities.
- Regional and local authorities.
- Public organisations, NGOs and other private structures working in field of sustainable development.
- Expert councils, coordinating committees and public councils for sustainable development.
- Lectures, clubs, study circles on the topic of sustainable development and LA21.
- Information places specialised in the sustainable development and LA21 (information corners in libraries, schools, executive committees in businesses and in organisations, mobile information centres).
- Organisational and information structures or networks on questions of sustainable development, including the use of the Internet.

¹ Southey, S. (2001) Accelerating sustainability: from Agenda to action. IN *Local Environment*. Vol. 4. P. 27–29.

A combination of these elements “designs” the process of LA21, strengthens and supports it and also produces a positive image of the work.

A chronology of the creation of legislative and other institutional bases for the development of LA21 at the national level in Belarus are reflected in table 6.

Table 6: Chronology of the creation of legislative and other institutional bases for the development of LA21

1992	The Republic of Belarus signed Agenda 21 at the UN Conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro
1996	The National Commission on Sustainable Development is formed under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus
1997	The first National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus is developed and approved by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus
1998	The Law “On the State Forecasting and Programmes of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus” is accepted improving the legal status of national sustainable development strategies and defining the order for its development
2002	The National Report on Progress in the Field of Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus is prepared for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (Republic of South Africa)
2002	The Republic of Belarus signed the resulting documents of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg
2004	The National Strategy of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020 is developed and approved by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus

In 1999 the beginning of the development process of the first Belarusian LA21 is started this picture laying the foundation for the local norms in this area (Figure 4).

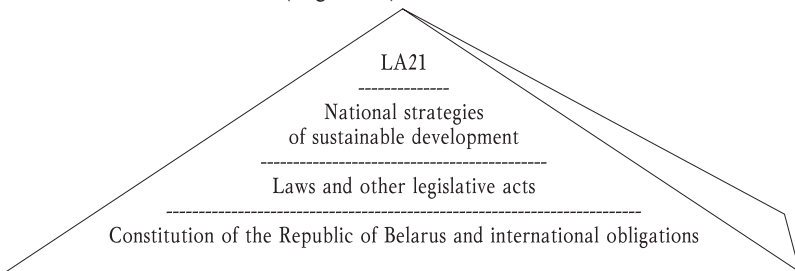


Figure 4: Legal foundation for LA 21 in Belarus

The analysis of the abovementioned legislative and regulatory documents shows from the start support for process of LA21 and its separate parts there has been in existence a legislative base in the Republic of Belarus that allows the conduct of this work in regions, districts, cities, towns, villages, local areas, schools and other places. Moreover, LA21 processes are recommended as an effective tool for development and it is indicated directly to the local authorities to initiate and support the development of local sustainable development strategies. But let us start at the beginning.

The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus

The operating Constitution of the Republic of Belarus (1994) sets the legal scope of local government and self-government in the country and fixes the same potential market abilities and institutes for sustainable development strategies at the local level (LA21).

Article 117 of the Belarusian Constitution says: “A local government and self-government is carried out by citizens through local Councils of deputies, executive and administrative bodies, territorial public self-government bodies, local referendums, meetings and other forms of the direct participation in state and public affairs”. The possibility of development and implementation of LA21 is assumed by the following methods:

- Local Councils of deputies
- Executive and administrative bodies
- Territorial public self-government bodies
- Local referendums
- Meetings
- Other forms of the direct participation in state and public affairs.

All of these methods are applicable in practice. At the same time it is expedient to be cognoscente of the methods of work which are the most accessible, easily organised and understood by authorities and the population. Real conditions and traditions also have to be taken into account and in practice it will allow the integration of this new method for development of local communities to be more

effective. For example, it is logical to get approval for the LA21, developed on the initiative of local authorities or wholly supported by it, from the proper Council or Executive Committee. By the way, Belarusian LA21 leaders acted in such way in Minsk city and in Disna town.

The Law of the Republic of Belarus: “Local Government and Self-Government in the Republic of Belarus”

In spite of the fact that the concepts of *local sustainable development strategies* or *LA21* are not reflected directly in the Law of the Republic of Belarus “About Local Government and Self-Government in the Republic of Belarus” from February, 20, 1991 № 617-XII (in a release from January, 10 2000 № 362-3), the possibility for application of this tool for territorial development is assumed under the general articles of the law.

So, Article 2 “Concept of local self-government” in this law declares: “Local self-government in the Republic of Belarus is a form of organisation and activity of citizens for the independent solution of social, economic, political and cultural questions of local value directly or through the bodies elected by them (underlined by me. – A.S.), coming from interests of the population and features development of administrative-territorial units on the basis of their own material and financial basis and obtained resources.” Thus, the possibility to use these rights in the area of decision making for local development problems (namely for this purpose LA21, its development and implementation) is fixed firmly in legislation. It is thus stipulated, that such activity can be carried out in two forms:

- Directly
- Through the elected bodies.

It opens wide opportunities for different varieties of local sustainable development strategies taking into account specific and real conditions in territories and settlements.

Article 6 of this law “Participation of citizens in local government and self-government”, determines that “citizens and residents of a certain territory can carry out local government and self-govern-

ment through Councils, executives and active branches, bodies of territorial public self-government, local referenda, meetings and other forms of direct participation in state and public affairs. All limitation of citizens' rights in local government and self-government are forbidden, except in cases, prescribed in the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus and laws of the Republic of Belarus." Thus development of the local sustainable development strategy (LA21) and activities mentioned in this article have a right to exist both within the framework of Councils and other structures and out of these rights as another form of the direct participation in public affairs.

These legal situations were taken into account during development of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020, in which an important role is given to LA21 in implementation of NSSD 2020 at the local level.

On the whole, development of the local government and self-government in the Republic of Belarus is a major question requiring immediate resolution.

The National Commission for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus

The National Commission for Sustainable Development of Belarus (NCSD) was formed in 1996 with the aim of developing the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Belarus, providing progressive development of economic and social areas, taking into account solutions for the priority environmental problems and also for control over acceptance of practical measures for implementation of decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

State regulation "The National Commission for Sustainable Development of Belarus" was approved by decision #197 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on March, 20th, 1996. It is the first statutory act at a national level concerning sustainable development.

The high legal status of NCSД was fixed by decision #264 of the Council of Ministries of the Republic of Belarus on February 27th 2002 according to which the NCSД's Chairman is Vice Prime Minister of Belarus. The Commission includes 25 people: ministers, deputy ministers and other high ranking officers of the ministries and departments and representatives of research institutions and universities.

Both National Strategies for Sustainable Development of Belarus (1997 and 2004) were developed under the NCSД's purview. The last one is the result of work on a joint project of the UNDP and the Government of Belarus on the development of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020. The NCSД also examined directions of work in the field of sustainable development in the country and discussed representation of the results of this work at the international level.

Discussion of development of NSSD 2020, its concepts and draft chapters at NCSД sessions substantially promoted distribution of ideas of sustainable development among Belarusian government officials. Also, independent experts and members of public associations were invited to NCSД sessions along with representatives of official bodies; because to this the first experience of teamwork on documents of a national level was gained. NCSД sessions became an information occasion for the publication of materials on sustainable development in the mass media and promoted the sustainable development concept among the population.

During 2001 – 2004 at NCSД sessions during discussions of various aspects of sustainable development attention was paid to local issues as well. So, for example, opinions on the importance of work in the field of sustainable development at a local level, including development of Local Agenda, were expressed. No special decisions according to these questions were made, and no transcripts of sessions were published, however participants of the sessions, including the author of this text, received additional ammunition (e.g. the positive attitude of the state bodies and individual high officials) to persuade local authorities of the expediency of running a Local Agenda.

As a whole, the creation and functioning of the NCSD has played a positive role in the development of the first and second National Strategies of Sustainable Development of Belarus, distribution of ideas of sustainable development and creation of methods for public participation in NSSD' development and implementation. At the same time, the full potential of the NCSD has not yet been completely achieved. The Commission did not become the important tool it should have in state influence on public processes which “would show the way” for the country based on sustainable development principles. Unfortunately, this task was not set for the NCSD. Therefore the legislatively fixed requirement for development of plans and forecasts for territories to be in accordance with the principles of NCSD was not overseen by anybody and was often carried out as a formality (so for example it was sufficient just to say at the beginning of a document that it “was developed on the basis of the NSSD”). Constantly informing the population about the NCSD work and about events in the field of sustainable development, achievements of science and practice were not been arranged. Experience of similar foreign organisations shows a great breadth of this type of opportunity².

Insufficient attention by the NCSD to Local Agenda 21 and other tools of sustainable development for local communities, in my opinion, are connected with the following:

- Absence in the structure of the supreme government bodies of the ministry or committee of departments which would be responsible for regional and local development (such ministries are created in many countries and they, as a rule, are called “ministries of regional development”).
- Absence of representatives of regions (districts, cities, towns and village councils) and public organisations on the NCSD.

² For example, on a website of the Council for Sustainable Development of Germany (www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de) you can find answers to the questions, concerning quality of life and validity in relation to the future generations, and also information on the contribution of the Council in the National Strategy of Sustainable Development. It is possible to look at consultation documents, to learn about terms of actions or to subscribe a newsletter. “P-LINK” enables access to meta-databases listed by projects, and in a discussion forum you can follow join in debate.

- Insufficiently active use by local authorities and other representatives of local communities (NGOs, local initiatives, business etc) of proof of cooperation with NCSД, such as letters, references and letters to them informing them of activities and making enquiries, etc.
- Absence of a permanent NCSД secretariat.

One of the recommendations of the international commission of experts who studied productivity of ecological activity of Belarus was the following: “It is necessary to include NGO representatives in the structure of the National Commission for Sustainable Development”³.

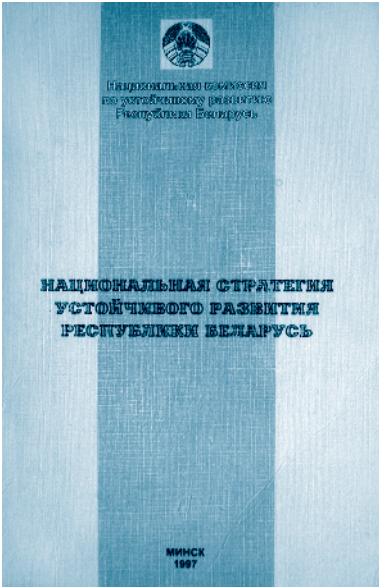
Increase in the organisational, coordinating and informational role of the NCSД by widening the work under Local Agenda 21 in Belarus is expected. The NCSД’s value should also be amplified by lobbying for the interests of local communities connected with their sustainable development regarding financing of such work from the republican budget.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus (1997)

The first National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Belarus (Strategy 97) was developed according to a Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus in 1996 – 1997. Thus, Belarus has executed one of its obligations to the world community, taken on board when signing Agenda 21 at the International Conference of the United Nations on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Belarus was the first of the CIS countries which developed and accepted this document at a national level.

Strategy 97 was prepared by the Research Economic Institute of the Ministry of Economy of Belarus with participation of leading scientists and experts of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus,

³ The European Economic Commission, Committee on the Ecological Policy. (2005) *Review of Productivity of Ecological Activity*. Belarus. The second review. / Series of reviews of productivity of ecological activity. Issue 22. New York and Geneva: United Nations. P. 68.



National Sustainable Development Strategy – 1997

other ministries, departments and scientific research institutes on the basis of the offers presented by the ministries and other republican bodies, Regional Executive Committees and the Minsk Executive Committee of the City Council.

Strategy 97 covers the forecast period to 2010. On January, 31st, 1997 it was approved by the National Commission on Sustainable Development, and on March, 27th, 1997 by Decision #255 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

“Proceeding from the accepted strategy it is necessary to develop corresponding regulatory and legal acts and also nationwide, branch and regional programmes in which it is necessary to settle on actions and resources for maintenance of sustain-

able development”⁴.

In a number of chapters of Strategy 97 there are recommendations, principles and approaches corresponding to the spirit of Agenda 21. Its implementation is important for the success of both national and local strategies of sustainable development. So, for example, in chapter 5.4 “Account of the interests of basic groups of the population including women, children and youth” the importance of partnership at implementation of the sustainable development strategy is emphasized. It is noted, that “achievement of sustainable development is impossible without participation of wide layers of the population. The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Belarus is directed towards creation of conditions in which each citizen, social group and organisation can have an opportunity to participate in and have an influence on the environment and in decision making” (p. 148).

⁴ Quotations are from: National sustainable development strategy of the Republic of Belarus. (1997) Minsk: Research Economic Institute of the Ministry of Economy of Belarus. P. 2.

Considering the participation of the youth in the process of sustainable development, Strategy 97 considered it necessary:

- “To involve the youth in the processes connected with sustainable development, to promote dialogue with youth organisations concerning development and evaluation of forecasts and programmes on environmental preservation and development...
- To create help centres for sustainable development in each institution of higher education and colleges.
- To organise a National Republican Council of Youth Organisations on Sustainable Development.”

Unfortunately, these ones and many other progressive Strategy 97 declarations have not been achieved yet.

In chapter 5.5 “Strengthening of the role of non government organisations, workers and trade unions, business and scientific circles in sustainable development” there are also progressive appeals. In particular, it is noted, that “for the solution to problems of maintenance and of the environmentally safe and sustainable development of the country (and, accordingly, of its regions, districts and cities etc – A.S.) the opportunities of non government organisations, workers and trade unions, business and scientific circles should be used as much as possible” (p. 152). “It is noted further, that the value of non government organisations in this area has unfortunately been underestimated until recently. Considering the generality and increasing number of unresolved environmental problems, there is an acute need to develop and adapt to new political, legal, social and economic conditions and create systems of participation for non government organisations in development and implementation of sustainable development policy” (p. 152). In connection with these needs a number of Strategy 97 objectives were formulated, among which are the following:

- “Development of mechanisms for allowing non government organisations to play a full role as partners during maintenance of environmental safety and sustainable development.
- Support by the supreme bodies of authority of non government organisations in creation and implementation of programmes of environmental safety and development” (p. 153).

These statements and objectives are still relevant now.

Sections 5.7 “Regional and local initiatives of sustainable development” and 5.8 “Spatial planning and perfection of a control system over settlements” of Strategy 97 deserve to be published in this book completely⁵. The status of these sections has not lost their urgency even now.

So, for example, in section 5.7 it is noted: “The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Belarus should be more and more based on opportunities and initiatives of local state bodies, self-government and residents from the corresponding regions ...” (p. 158). In that way the execution of Strategy 97 is imposed as a duty of local authorities, as well as involving the population in these processes of.



In the agro tourist site Zarechany

In section 5.8 disadvantages of the existing system of local government and self-government are described in detail: “Controls over settlements are not sufficiently empowered to create solutions to social, environmental, economic and other problems, the mechanism of a rational combination of inter-

ests of local and republican levels does not exist. Governance for decades in its organisational, legal and economic methods has been adapted for the requirements of a command-administrative system. The legislative recognition of the priority of maintenance and improvement of residential areas in practice was not carried out during economic activities. As a result buildings needed for industrial requirements of separate branches were built instead of developing

⁵ See Annexure 2.

a pleasant environment for life. The democratic basis of decision making was broken; the opinion of the population was not taken into account” (p. 163). For overcoming of the noted disadvantages it is necessary to make additional efforts both in the area of development of the legislation and in the practical work of the central and local authorities. Many existing places in the legislation “register” such opportunities. Increasing the activity of local Councils, innovative decisions of executive committees, delegation of power “from top down to bottom up”, encouragement of creative attitude to responsibilities, thinking of the needs of the population – these approaches should supersede rigid command-administrative styles of work, mistrust in the abilities of heads and experts and the sceptical attitude to public initiatives. The effect of this type of behaviour will not be slow to have an effect.

Strategy 97, possessing a high legal status, has unequivocally set the task of development of local sustainable development strategies for cities of Belarus: “For all cities, especially those of them where serious problems in the field of sustainable development are observed, it is necessary to develop corresponding programmes directed at the solution to such problems and maintenance of sustainability in their development” (p. 165). It is necessary to hurry to execute this important requirement before the end of the life of this strategy (in force until 2010).

As a whole, Strategy 97 has not been hugely popular even among the experts, let alone the wide public. Independent experts were not involved in the development of Strategy 97. There was no preliminary open discussion of chapters of the document with participation from representatives of public organisations (before the ratification). Besides as researchers say, “... the haste of developing NSSD’ (*they mean Strategy 97- A.S.*), the extreme instability of the social and economic situation and its weak predictability at the time of creating the Strategy and its pioneer character have predetermined its imperfection”⁶.

⁶ Strategy of sustainable development of Belarus: Continuity and update (2003) An analytical report. Minsk: Unipak. P. 5.

Despite this fact, Strategy 97 became one of the first foundations of the legal basis for development of sustainable development strategies at a local level (and is not completed even now). Pioneers of the Belarusian movement in this area (the Children's centre "Nadezhda", local authorities of Turow town, and "Ecoline" NGO) referred to chapters of the Strategy 97 at the beginning of work on Local Agenda for substantiation of processes and in applications. Adopting Strategy 97 has awakened interest in sustainable development by scientists and experts throughout Belarus, stimulated new initiatives in different regions and led to the creation of new non government organisations.

The Law of the Republic of Belarus: "State Forecasting and Programmes of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus"

This law was passed on May 5th, 1998 after the development and ratification of the first Belarusian NSSD. It has determined the system for state forecasts of socio-economic development of Belarus which includes:

- For the long term outlook – National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development⁷ of Belarus for 15 years and the

⁷ An attentive reader, obviously, has already noticed the distinctions in the names applied to official documents with reference to sustainable development strategies. In fact, in Strategy 97 the term "sustainable development strategy" was applied, and in the abovementioned Law of 1998 the term "sustainable social and economic development strategy" is now used. Running ahead, we shall mention the "National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development of Belarus to 2020" in which, nevertheless, the term "sustainable development" is used practically everywhere (without insert of "social and economic"). These "confusions" are not the reflection of opposite positions of principle concerning the said terms. It is more likely a consequence of influence of strong stereotypes and the habit of using the word combination "social and economic" for designation of all aspects of the ability to live in a society. So, participants in the preparation of a bill "State Forecasting and Programmes of Social and Economic Development of Belarus" noted, that originally in the project the term "sustainable development strategy" has been used and only after time in the coordination of it the term "social and economic" has been added. And in that publication it has entered into the text of the law. This "publication" became the subject of strong criticism from many experts who saw in these terms the deliberate desire to avoid environmental problems in the sustainable development strategy. I am sure it was not "malicious intent" or someone's "plot". At the same time the use of an adequate term (especially at the stage of its

Basic Directions of Socio-Economic Development of Belarus for 10 years.

- For the medium term outlook – the Programme of Socio-Economic Development of Belarus for Five Years.
- For the short term period – the Annual Forecast of Socio-Economic Development of Belarus.

NSSD occupies a privileged position in the legislative hierarchy and on the basis of which all state scheduled and forecast documents must be developed (and it is fixed by the present law). It applies not only at a nationwide level but also through economic complexities and branches of the economy and also administrative and territorial units. Thus, conceptual positions of sustainable development for the country stated in NSSD should ideally be transformed stage by stage to concrete activities supported by resources. That means that, figuratively speaking, NSSD should simultaneously be the mainstream method for procedures to achieve something and the “litmus paper” for measuring the contents of plans and forecasts to meeting the most basic standards of sustainable development.

The Law also says that development of state forecasts for socio-economic development of Belarus in the long, medium and short term are provided by the Council of Ministers of Belarus. Thus additional consolidation of the high legal and administrative status of NSSD is based on reality.

introduction into theory and practice) really is rather important for unequivocal understanding of its essence. As the term “sustainable development” is recognised (though disputes on terminology continue) translation of the English equivalent “sustainable development”, both the uniform understanding and application of this term provide an opportunity for discussion about decisions on problems of mankind in a planetary scale. Simultaneous use in the scientific academic literature and also in regulatory and legal acts of such terms as “sustainable economic growth”, “sustainable economic development”, “sustainable development of the economy”, etc., also adds greater complexity. Authors of the analytical report “Strategy of Sustainable Development of Belarus: Continuity and Updating” have noticed it. They recommended for future developers of sustainable development strategies: “As the word “sustainable” is a part of the concept “sustainable development”, to exclude it from use within the limits of the document in contexts in which it is possible to use its synonyms” (p. 196). It seems to be sensible to use this recommendation to the scientific academic literature and in regulatory and legal acts to the greatest possible extent.

The National Report of the Republic of Belarus for the Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002)

The “National Progress Report on Sustainable Development of Belarus”⁸ was prepared in 2002 according to the Plan of Preparation for Belarus for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (Republic of South Africa).

It is significant that the group of authors of the National Report was built on the basis of the Coordination Council from a joint UNDP and Government of Belarus project “Development and Implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development to 2020 of the Republic of Belarus” (the Project on NSSD 2020). This Coordination Council was created as an advisory body whose structure included representatives from state structures (the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Preservation of the Environment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Architecture and Construction), public organisations (“Belarusian Office of the International Academy of Ecology”, “Ecological initiative “Belaia Rus”, “Ecodom” and others) and scientific research institutes and universities (Belarusian State University and the National Academy of Sciences). At the sessions of the Coordination Council the most important issues of activity of NSSD 2020 were discussed, for example they heard about building a creative collection of authors for the development of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, its structure, reports on implemented seminars, round tables and foreign training events.

The Coordination Council has proved that it was an effective group of qualified experts capable of solving a set problem to a high level of quality. Therefore, when the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Belarus, responsible for preparation of the National Report to the Summit on Sustainable Development, had to develop this document as an emergency, the choice fell to the Coordination Council. The Coordination Council was charged with development of the Na-

⁸ Bogdanovich, A. V., Laguta S.S. and Raiman A.E. (2002) *National report on progress in the field of sustainable development of the Republic of Belarus*. Minsk: National Sustainable Development Commission.

tional Report by a decision of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Belarus.

This example shows that there are opportunities and occasions for non government bodies to participate in development and implementation of state tasks. Such cooperation is possible both on national, regional and local (district, city, village) levels. High levels of competence, quality of work, the expert potential of such public bodies can all become the basis for fruitful cooperation by NGOs with state structures.

As a whole, this report could be considered to be the first document in the field of sustainable development in Belarus which was prepared by representatives of state structures and public organisations jointly. For the first time the state officials paid attention to NGOs as partners in expert work on sustainable development. Doing this has been justified.

In the National Report Belarus appears in a favourable light with regards to many factors connected with the solution to environmental problems and wildlife management (for example, on reduction of emissions). However, it is impossible to tell whether the Agenda 21 requirements have really been achieved during the reporting period of the evaluated strategy. At the same time the National Report as a form of public evaluation of progress in sustainable development is a rather successful method for monitoring and updating the joint policy of the state and public bodies in this area.

Section 4.3.4 “Regional and Local Initiatives of Sustainable Development” of the National Report is devoted to sustainable development at the local level. It is noted in the document, that the “National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Belarus” should take the opportunities and initiative of local state bodies, self-government



National Report on Progress in the Field of Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus for the Johannesburg Summit 2002

and residents of regions more and more. However, local authorities in our country do not pay enough attention to this issue”. So, as a matter of fact, the necessity to draw greater attention to this issue, including giving assistance to such local initiatives, is underlined.

It is written in the National Report that “non state public organisations have recently begun to have more influence on the population and its separate groups in districts, regions, cities and towns, but their activity is not systematic. These one-time actions are financed, as a rule, by foreign sponsors”¹⁰. Taking a more systemic view on activities for sustainable development is an important methodical principle of work and this recommendation, in my opinion, can be applied both to the activity of public and state organisations.

The National Report cites the following as positive examples of work in the field of sustainable development, fulfilled by local authorities and public organisations: Turow town with the joint activities of the NGO “Ecoline”; the public organisation “Minsk Ecological Council”; and Gomel city, where two environmental groups and a number of public organisations are very active. The implemented actions in these cities are the following:

- Public environmental assessment
- Many environmental activities attracting the attention of the mass-media
- “Environmental schools” for different groups of the population (women, youth, neighbourhood communities, etc.).

The non governmental organisation “Lev Sapega Foundation,” one of whose purposes was the development of local self-government, and also the Belarusian Female Information and Coordination Centre, leading work with female public organisations in regions, are also named in the National Report.

⁹ Bogdanovich, A. V., Laguta S.S. and Raiman A.E. (2002) *National report on progress in the field of sustainable development of the Republic of Belarus*. Minsk: National Sustainable Development Commission. P. 44.

¹⁰ Bogdanovich, A. V., Laguta S.S. and Raiman A.E. (2002) *National report on progress in the field of sustainable development of the Republic of Belarus*. Minsk: National Sustainable Development Commission. P. 44.

Let us take note that in this list only the work of the Executive Committee of Turow jointly with the NGO “Ecoline” can be characterised as the activity on development and implementation of Local Agenda. Environmental actions, developing experience of foreign local self-government and also support of female public organisations in regions – all these are important activities in the field of sustainable development but at the same time they are only separate elements of a complexity of strategic work. This situation, on the one hand, testifies to the small number of initiatives on the development of Local Agendas at the time of writing the National Report, and on the other it is an indicator of insufficient understanding by the authors of the Report of the essence of this work. At the same time it shows the need for strengthening information and educational work in the area of sustainable development.

The “National Progress Report on Sustainable Development of Belarus” became the first international document officially presented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, at which the task of Local Agenda was set (and at the same time the obligation was assumed). “In Belarus it is necessary to encourage the development of Local Agenda 21 in city settlements and regions in every possible way; it will promote the understanding of the population and increase the contribution of local authorities to the process of sustainable development in regions and the whole country”¹¹.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020¹²

Special attention in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020 is paid to problems of local initiatives in the field of sustainable development, including

¹¹ Bogdanovich, A. V., Laguta S.S. and Raiman A.E. (2002) *National report on progress in the field of sustainable development of the Republic of Belarus*. Minsk: National Sustainable Development Commission. P. 44.

¹² National strategy of sustainable socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for the period to 2020. (2004) Minsk: National Sustainable Development Commission. See full text of the NSSD 2020 on www.fpb-belarus.org. Extracts of NSSD 2020 about Local Agenda can be found in Annexure 3.

Local Agenda 21 (in comparison to the first Belarusian strategy for sustainable development – Strategy 97). It can be explained by the significant amount of the experience of Local Agenda in many



National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Republic of Belarus to 2020

countries of the world, more attention to these aspects of sustainable development at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the appearance of the first initiatives in Belarus and the increased interest of representatives of local authorities to these issues. Besides new experts were involved in NSSD 2020 work, representatives of regional public organisations and initiatives, whose interest in working on Local Agenda stimulated NSSD authors to study these issues in depth, took part in the discussion of NSSD chapters at round tables.

As a result NSSD 2020 has made local sustainable development strategies (Local Agenda) the basic tool for implementing NSSD. It is entrusted to republican and local authorities to carry out a suite of measures to develop and implement Local Agenda 21 at various territorial levels.

Questions about Local Agenda

The role of local authorities and local communities in development and implementation of Local Agenda

NSSD 2020 emphasises an important role for local authorities in development and implementation of Local Agenda: “Local administration becomes the core which unites all opinions, transforming them to specific targets and programmes and including them in the local sustainable development strategy (Local Agenda 21)” (p. 155). At the same time it is important to point out that for such administrative functions as collection of opinions from all representatives of

local communities, what is also best to carry out, using the mechanisms of Local Agenda, are SWOT-analyses, round table discussions and questioning the population (interviews, surveys etc).

At the same time NSSD 2020 pays attention to local communities, on the whole, as an interested party and an active participant of Local Agenda: “The creation of economic, social and environmental groundwork for sustainable development of the country is impossible without the involvement of local communities called to look for ways and means to ensure sustainable development in specific areas, urban and rural communities” (p. 183). The term “local community” used in NSSD 2020 currently has no precise legal definition in the legislation of Belarus. At the same time it is widely used in the legislation of foreign countries, including Russia and reflects the tendency for an increase in the value of local self-government. Ascertaining the important role of local communities in sustainable development processes in NSSD 2020 brings to the fore the requirement for prompt solutions to the following tasks:

- Deepening of theoretical research in this area (within the limits of state research programmes and programmes of international technical help).
- Creation of an institutional basis for local communities to function whilst conforming with the principles of sustainable development (first of all – acceptance of regulatory and legal acts demanding development of Local Agenda at a level of regions, districts, cities, towns and rural communities).
- Gaining, multiplying and spreading the experience in the development and implementation of LA21 and other mechanisms of sustainable development by local communities (by creating national and regional centres of sustainable development and also making available the opportunities of the Internet).

Development of local self-government as a precondition of sustainable development for territories

In NSSD 2020 it is noted that “achievement of positive results for sustainable development of city and rural settlements demands the strengthening of the institute of local self-government, expansion of its rights, financial opportunities and responsibilities, giving them

more independence and sufficiency of powers to accept and implement administrative decisions” (p. 166). The suggested transformations are an essential precondition for success of Local Agenda. Thus within the limits of the current legislation there are already some opportunities to achieve self-government as a right of the population. So, development and implementation of Local Agenda is an example of achieving these opportunities. At the same time expanding the scale and depth of the issue of local self-government remains a real task at the present stage of development of Belarus.

Scientific research in the field of economic and social relations and also the experience of economically developed countries conclusively proves the necessity and efficiency of decentralisation and consolidation of the institute of local self-governance. “Public administration literature tends to affirm that decentralisation will enhance the efficiency of public services, political participation and transparency, while reducing corruption and mobilising new financial and human resources by bringing “voter-consumers” closer to government”¹³. In practice decentralization (transfer of powers and duties from the central government to regional and local authorities) happens in approximately 80% of all developing countries and countries with transition countries¹⁴.

For Belarus this task is very important. “One of the primary objectives of the National Sustainable Development Strategy of Belarus to 2020 is to create organisational, legal, financial and other stimuli of regional and local initiatives aimed at establishing economic, social and environmental frameworks for sustainable development for regional and local communities of Belarus, searching actively for internal resources to address related tasks and ensuring effective support of these initiatives at a national and international level,” – is written in NSSD 2020 (pp. 183 – 184). “To achieve these objectives at different stages of NSSD 2020, several important tasks will need

¹³ Quotation from: Local authorities and human rights: Rendering effective services. (2005) Switzerland. Versoix: International Council on Human Rights Policy. P. 17.

¹⁴ Quotation from: Local authorities and human rights: Rendering effective services. (2005) Switzerland. Versoix: International Council on Human Rights Policy. P. 11.

to be resolved to ensure the improvement of the existing state administration and local self-government system and further democratise the entire Belarusian society” (p. 184). This task is so topical for Belarus that NSSD 2020 once again emphasises: “... Already at the first stage of NSSD 2020 implementation (up to 2010) in Belarus it is necessary to update regional policy for the state, decentralisation of the government and also to continue reforming the local government and self-government system” (p. 186).

Local Agenda as a tool of the regional policy

It is written in NSSD 2020: “Regional policy implementation includes legal, economic and financial tools aimed at ensuring regional sustainable development – development and implementation of Local Agenda 21” (p. 166). On page 186 this argument is described in greater detail: “The following tools are considered to be the basic ones for administrative, economic and financial regulation of social and economic development of regions...:

- Creating complex programmes of social and economic development for regions, “Local Agenda 21”, allowing local authorities to effectively plan and implement the most appropriate methods of increasing the economic potential of their territories and make improvements to social and environmental conditions of the life of population...
- Preparation, replication and dissemination of widespread methodological recommendations for the development and implementation of Local Agenda 21 for use by local control and self-management groups, non government organisations and various groups of the population, by placing items on the websites of corresponding republican state bodies and also using pilot projects at different levels of administrative and territorial units,” (pp. 186 – 187).

Thus, Local Agenda is the priority tool of regional policy implementation. That, undoubtedly, strengthens the status and recognition of LA21 among politicians, managers and the public. This argument, at the same time, highlights the complex nature of LA21, uniting together legal, economic and financial methods of influence for development of territories.

Examining actual organisational forms of effective regional policy, NSSD 2020 specifies, that “the relevant investment and innovative activities can be intensified through the creation of regional agencies, councils and foundations and exercising an integrated and well balanced approach to the regional development” (p. 130). These forms of assistance for development of territories of all levels (from inter-regional down to the level of a small village) are the major resource for the solution of their problems and transition to sustainable development.

Also in NSSD 2020 the opportunity for implementation of one more form of promotion of sustainable development ideas and support for the development of Local Agenda 21 – public councils – is designated: “The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, September 2002) reaffirms the resolve of the world community to continue promotion and strengthening of sustainable development councils both at a national and local level” (p. 183). NCSO has already occupied its place as such a structure at the national (country) level. Besides at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Preservation of the Environment of Belarus a Public Coordination Ecological Council was created in whose agenda there are also questions of sustainable development.

Creation of councils of sustainable development in Belarus at a regional level has just begun. One such council was created for control over the implementation of the Strategic Plan of Sustainable Development of the City of Minsk to 2020. The functions of this type of council are also carried out by the Local Action Group created for implementation of the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Disna County. At Minsk Regional Executive Committee the Public council on the development of agro and ecotourism in Minsk region was created¹⁵. This council, owing to the inter branch nature of problems of rural and environmental tourism, pays attention to the questions of sustainable development too. In September, 2006 the Rossony District Executive Committee of Vitebsk region made a decision to create a Public council for the development and imple-

¹⁵ Lukashuk, S. (2006) The public council on agro eco tourism at Minsk Regional Executive Committee is organised. IN *Tourism and Recreation*. Vol. 2. Issue 15.

mentation of the sustainable development strategy Local Agenda 21 of Rossony district. At the same time in other district of Vitebsk region (Lepel) the regional Executive Committee ordered the creation of a working group for the development of a Sustainable Development Strategy for Lepel district. In the near future, considering the increasing interest of municipal authorities and NGOs in cities and regions about development of Local Agendas, it is natural to expect a growth in the amount of councils for sustainable development in the country.



Traditional craft at the festival in Motol village

Local Agenda as an important leverage for rural sustainable development

NSSD 2020 has placed both the methodical and organisational bases for development of sustainable development strategies of rural territories at a republican and local level. It is noted in it, that “it is necessary to move from the agro industrial development concept to rural development concept” (p. 95). The basic argument is in essence a radical brake from the stereotypes in relation to rural development and simultaneously the central ideology of village regeneration. NSSD 2020 emphasises, that an important role in the solution to problems of villages can be played by implementation of “Local sustainable development strategies (Local Agenda 21) in districts, towns and villages” (p. 96). This approach and similar tools of rural development have recently started to be applied in the economically developed European countries, gradually becoming a

key part of the policy of the European Union for development of rural territories¹⁶.

***Importance of the development of democracy
and building of a civil society***

Democracy and a favourable environment for building civil society are necessary conditions in development and effective implementation of Local Agendas. These conditions make it possible to achieve equal rights in partnerships for all participants of the process of Local Agenda – representatives of authority, public organisations and business. In this regard NSSD 2020 specifies that “strengthening of democratic principles of the life of the country and building of a civil society with political and social stability at its base are major factors in the sustainable development of Belarus,” (p. 170).

Developing this position, NSSD 2020 emphasises that “One of the primary goals for NSSD 2020 is to create conditions allowing every individual, social group and organisation to participate in governmental decision-making, receive all information about the results of implemented decisions and to assess their impact on civil society structures and socio-political institutions. At the same time, it is necessary to maximise the involvement of non government organisations (NGOs), working class, trade unions, business and science during the implementation of the sustainable development strategy” (p. 171). Thus, NSSD 2020, being a part of the legislation of Belarus, determines strategic directions for the development of democracy and civil society. It is important, that these clauses of the National Strategy have been input into regional and branch forecasts, plans and programmes, and also (and most significantly!) in joint practical actions of governing and public bodies. The urgency of this reform is pointed to, for example, in the NSSD 2020 section, where it speaks about the support of development of public associations: “Enhancement of the role of NGOs as public partners of government organisations requires continuation of the development of official procedures and instruments, which would ensure real involvement of NGOs at all levels of NSSD implementation: starting

¹⁶ Editor’s note: The first Local Agenda programme in the EU was called LEADER 1 and started to be rolled out in the UK in 1992

with policy development and decision making continuing until actual implementation, based on the principle of shared responsibility (p. 172).

Initiators of Local Agenda

The following is written in NSSD 2020: “Local Agenda 21 initiatives and other similar activities should originate with local authorities, non government organisations, economic entities, condominium¹⁷ associations, individuals, who will independently define a range of problems, tools and a timeframe for implementation taking into account local needs, socio-economic, natural, environmental and other specifics and modalities largely influencing the sustainable development status in given areas and regions” (p. 184). Thus, the sphere of organisations and people who can and for whom it is recommended to be involved in developing and implementing Local Agendas is widely scoped, and for any practical purposes is not limited. It creates the opportunity for various people and organisations interested in sustainable development of regions, cities, districts, villages, local areas and other places to achieve real work in the field of strategic development of their territories.

Initiators of Local Agenda in NSSD 2020 are named condominium associations – a public entity rather new to Belarus created by citizens and legal persons for the joint management of the real estate belonging them¹⁸. Joint property ownership and the subsequent common interest to effectively operate an apartment building or a cottage settlement and aspirations to create comfortable and healthy living conditions, create serious motivation for the people’s participation in developing sustainable development strategies for the small community. Foreign experience shows that associations of home owners or apartment building co-owners often become the pioneers and the most stable supporters for the introduction of

¹⁷ Editor’s note: In Belarus these take the form of large concrete tower blocks with a distinctive nature depending on which Soviet era they were built during. Many are very old and in great need of repair due to lack of previous state maintenance of these buildings.

¹⁸ See more in: Sivagrakau, A. and Fadeev, V. (2000) *Comments about the law of the Republic of Belarus “Joint home ownership”*. Minsk: Amalfeia.

principles of sustainability. The start of these processes can be seen in many associations of home owners in Minsk.

***Importance of studying foreign experiences
and development of international cooperation***

NSSD 2020 has not given much direction on Local Agenda support, for studying international experience and inviting international cooperation. Strategic interventions in this area are created both for the supreme bodies of the government and for regional and local authorities. In NSSD 2020 it is emphasised: “The national government bodies of Belarus are to strengthen and improve cooperation with international organisations on a continuous basis – UNDP, HABITAT, UNEP, the World Bank, EBRD, etc., as well as with the European Union and those governments that have attained recent spectacular successes in state support of regional and local initiatives, in particular, in the conduct of Local Agenda 21 campaigns (Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, Denmark, etc.)”¹⁹



Cooking competition during the local festival in Lepel town

It is important, that these programmes (for supporting local initiatives and carrying out national campaigns on the development of Local Agenda) became a reality as soon as possible. It is obvious that the National Commission on Sustainable Development of Belarus should carry out the systematic management and control over the discharge of this NSSD 2020 obligation.

¹⁹ National strategy of sustainable socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus for the period to 2020. (2004) Minsk: National Sustainable Development Commission. P. 185

At the same time the NSSD has made the following as its aim: “For effective coordination of regional and local initiatives local controls should have wider organisational, legal and financial autonomy. They should also have closer connections with international organisations promoting international cooperation of regional and local controls, exchange of best practices of management of the municipal economy, preservation of the environment - the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), etc.” (pp. 185 – 186). The resolution of these tasks is currently held back because of unwieldy, highly regulated procedures for registration of projects for technical and humanitarian help in the Republic of Belarus. It appears very difficult to overcome difficult bureaucratic obstacles, to achieve “favour” with a small and medium level official, which based on his own subjective understanding, can fundamentally complicate and prolong the length of time for approval. This type of system generates a hotbed for corruption and other abuse and as a whole interferes with information and additional financing of the important social, economic and environmental programmes in Belarus. In fact, the foreign donor organisations will not wait excessive months and years to help Belarus ... consequently material, financial and information streams of international technical and humanitarian help pass to Russia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Poland ... bypassing Belarus. Moreover, not only officials but the urban population, country people, youth and pensioners suffer because of it. It is obvious that this situation should be radically changed as soon as possible.

Experience of the UNDP project on the Development of National Strategy for Sustainable development to 2020

In the middle of 2001 the joint project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Belarus #BYE/01/001 “Assistance in Development and Implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development” began work in Belarus. Development of ecological, nature-oriented and socio-

political sections of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) of Belarus for the period 2005 – 2020 were carried out under the framework of the project. The project had to provide wide public participation of all interested parties in discussions about NSSD 2020, its modification and additions to the sections developed by experts. An important component of the project was the information support from organisations and experts on the subject of sustainable development. Actions designed to strengthen the capacity of experts involved as advisers, including studying foreign experiences in the field of sustainable development, were also implemented.

At the development stage, public structures were created that helped to bring crucial contact between non government organisations (NGOs) and state structures:

- Coordination Council for the Project (CCP)
- Public Advisory Body (PAB) for the project.

The CCP included representatives from ministries, departments, higher educational institutions and public organisations. They participated in discussions about the most important questions of how the project would function and developed recommendations concerning this. It was a kind of administrative-methodical centre promoting optimal decisions and support to the project implementation. Participation of representatives of various state and public structures in the CCP work provided comprehensive judgment about the problems discussed, created conditions for exploring complex decisions and taught people to compromise on the questions at issue.

The PAB, uniting public organisations, (starting with seven at the beginning of the project increasing to 30 at the closing stage), functioned as the first “main public examination” of the decisions made under the framework of the project. Thus, it is distinctive, that at the beginning when PAB was created the majority of its members were environmental NGOs. Later the organisations working in social, cultural and educational spheres and professional NGOs began to join them. During more than three years of work on the project at the PAB sessions many real problems of sustainable development were discussed, the structure of the future NSSD was looked at and

projects contained in many of its chapters were analysed. Many public organisations, whose representatives were a part of the PAB, became the initiators of development of the Local Agenda work in Belarusian cities and villages.

The initial stage of the project was characterised by an absence of experience of communication and real interaction between the non government organisations, governmental bodies and the scientific sector.

I remember one of the first information seminars under the framework of the project. For the first time representatives of state structures (ministries, the state scientific research institutes and universities), public organisations and experts from the institutes which earlier had not been involved in the process of developing the NSSD sat down together at one table. “Public organisations can scarcely be useful to the NSSD development – said the “state” people, – “in fact they, NGOs’ representatives, are just ‘talkers’, but not experts”. Representatives of public organisations and independent experts said “What is the sense in us offering something to go into the chapters of the NSSD if we know in advance, that it will not be accepted. In spite of everything, they will ignore our ideas, and they will, as usual, write what is required for the state bodies”. Extraordinary decisions were required to solve this, apparently, insoluble problem. And, understanding the importance of the problem, we undertook a series of actions. First, the project supported NGOs in the following directions:

- NGOs were given the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise (offers to prepare presentations on separate aspects of sustainable development for the next seminar public organisations were made).
- Enticing new independent experts to cooperate with NGOs (thus, these experts began to speak on behalf of NGOs strengthened the image of the NGOs).
- Creating conditions which would interest NGOs in the expert work (selection of group members for developing the NSDS was made on a competitive basis which enabled representatives of

public organisations to put together a contract and to get fee for the work).

- Making available to all interested NGOs a complete set of information on all scientifically-methodical works concerning sustainable development made under the framework of the project.
- Providing feedback to NGOs from state organisations, the developers of NSSD, which informed NGOs whether their offers were accepted, and if not, why not.

Secondly, systematic work with the state structures was carried out in the following directions:

- “Adoption” of the opportunity for teamwork with “public people” (both sides were of necessity invited for this purpose to all project events).
- Regular distribution of information about foreign experience of teamwork with NGOs and state bodies and about the effectiveness of this practice (for example in the form of distributing materials to sessions, seminars and round table discussions).
- Development of new forms of consultation for preparing materials, including projects of NSSD chapters, with round tables in an “open format” (with invitations to all interested parties).

The last undertaking (open round tables) did not happen easily. For example, when we suggested beginning discussion on the first versions of the NSSD chapters with public meetings, representatives of the official body who supervised the development of the National Strategy, recommended doing without them. “If it is necessary for you that the report say this has happened, then write that it has been done and we shall confirm it”, they suggested to me. It was necessary to go through all the arguments for preservation of the open hearings. I mentioned the seemingly unconditional UNDP requirement on this question; reference to the statement of the high officials who once supported this suggestion; and, every possible proofs of the “absolute safety” of such an action. At first, everybody only agreed to carry out one trial consultation on one of the “neutral” NSSD chapters, and the openness of the participation was limited by first drawing up a of lists of participants. The round table was held with enthusiasm: efficiently, correctly and very produc-

tively. And when it ended they called me and said: “Now we will subject all the next chapters to the open round table process.”

Reflecting on what had happened; I have concentrated on the following circumstances which it seems to me, were important arguments in the decision to carry out the open round table discussions. So, a joint discussion to a certain degree removes part of the responsibility for the result from one person. New participants to the discussions often bring “fresh insight” to those things that a team who have been working together for a long time, may not notice. Also, within the structure of the scientific bodies in the state institutes it is sometimes uncomfortable for a governing body to level criticism at its personnel. When such criticism comes from lips of a ‘foreign’ participant to the discussions, it helps the leader to influence the contents of the document and not to have it complicated by the interrelationships between team members. Lastly, the most important argument is the significant innovative potential of these discussions. New ideas, new views and additional information introduced by different participants, fundamentally enrich the material being discussed and increased much of its quality and scientific value. “Chapters by many authors were noticeably transformed for the better after consultations. They became much better”, – NSSD 2020 developers shared this view.

As a whole, our approach has justified itself. As a result many experts representing public organisations have proved their high professional level, actively worked on NSSD chapters together with representatives of official bodies. Levels of participation by NGO representatives in the development of a scientific method and documents under the framework of the project are the following:

- For the development of the Analytical report on the first NSSD 1997 of Belarus, 7 out of 35 experts represented public organisations.
- 5 out of 32 people represented NGOs in the commission of experts for the preparation of the National Progress Report on Sustainable Development of Belarus to the Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

- Of 10 experts on the revision of the NSSD 2020 Concept, 2 people were NGO representatives.
- Out of 59 experts involved under the framework of the project on writing of the NSSD 2020 chapters, 10 people represented NGOs.

Effective tools that increased the work efficiency on NSSD 2020 within the structure of the project were:

- Creation and support of an information group belsd@yahoo.com on the Internet
- Creation of a website for the project, where preliminary versions of strategic chapters were placed.

So, the information group on the Internet, which was created originally for informing PAB members about the time and place of meetings, has gradually turned into an important information resource. All participants of the group received copies of the NSSD chapters via the postal service as well and so had an opportunity to get operationally involved with its progress. Remarks and suggestions about the text were actively expressed, summarised in the project and transferred to the developers and parent organisation. This information group became a real forum for discussion of problems of sustainable development in Belarus. The number of participants has grown during the project from 7 up to 80 people. Among them there were heads of public organisations, science officers, teachers, employees of ministries and business people. In addition to the capital, the distribution connected people from regions of the country such as Grodno, Brest, Baranovichi, Bobruisk, Orsha, Lida and other places. Thus, this distribution has created a foundation for building a wider public movement for sustainable development in Belarus.

This method of distribution of sustainable development ideas and improvement of professional skills of experts, through study trips to foreign countries and regions of Belarus where there is operational experience of sustainable development, has proved itself by successful project implementation. For example, in 2002 a group of experts spent a week training on developing sustainable development strategies in Estonia; in 2003 a study tour of Belarusian experts went to

Poland to participate in a conference and studying of Local Agenda experiences; and, two round table discussions were also organised in Turow and in the Children's centre "Nadezhda" to look at the structure of their projects. Turow and "Nadezhda" are pioneers in the development of local sustainable development strategies in Belarus. These training events also create an additional bonus in the establishment of partnerships between the participants of the trips representing different organisations (state and public) and regions of the country.



Scientific Café on Sustainable Development started after Johannesburg Summit 2002 and it continues its work now

The project was aimed at carrying out many actions together with various partner organisations. Financial support for additional parts of the project has been given by the World Bank in Belarus, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Danish Alternative Energy Agency and Department of Public Information of the UN Representation in Belarus. A number of regional seminars on sustainable development were organised together with the World Bank under the aegis of the project. With the cooperation of the editorial staff of the "Belarusian Economic Magazine" a column "Sustainable Development" appeared in the magazine. Resources from the project published a magazine called "Pryrodnye Resursy" ("Natural Resources") as well as the bulletin "Zelenye Novosti" ("Green News"). In cooperation with the NGO "Ecoproject" a brochure on experiences of the development of Local Agenda 21 in Belarus and other countries was also published. A number of seminars and consultations on sustainable development occurred jointly with the Support Programme for Belarus of the German Federal Government. These joint initiatives allowed savings in the project resources and the achievement of good results.

The necessity of monitoring the implementation of the NSSD

Experts from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, assessing NSSD 2020, correctly stated that “it is important to analyse annually or, at least, every second year the results achieved and, probably, to make a complete review of the Strategy in approximately 2010”²⁰. This type of monitoring of the implementation of NSSD 2020 regarding the development and implementation of Local Agenda would give the process more stability and would demonstrate the level of attention of our country’s leaders to LA21. All this would promote a positive image of this method of territorial development and focus local authorities on dynamic work in this direction.

A possible alternative, or rather addition, to state monitoring of the implementation of NSSD 2020 could be a public examination of its implementation, executed by public organisations and independent experts. Publication or presentation on the Internet of the results of this type of public examination and the organisation of its wide public consultation could positively reflect on the implementation of NSSD 2020.

Carrying out monitoring of the implementation of all sustainable development strategies should be a prerequisite and developed at a national level. It could be expedient to legislate for this to happen.

Availability of legal information and law enforcement practices

Except for legislative and regulatory acts, the availability of legal information and law-enforcement practices is also of great value in developing Local Agenda 21. Because of the Internet, the solution to the problem of availability of information nowadays has substan-

²⁰ The European Economic Commission. Committee on the Ecological Policy. (2005) *Review of Productivity of Ecological Activity*. Belarus. The second review / Series of reviews of productivity of ecological activity. Issue 22. New York and Geneva: United Nations. P. 86.

tially reduced. At the same time until recently in many regions, cities, towns and villages of Belarus this technology was not widespread or was unreliable or expensive. The programme “Internetization of the whole country” still has not been implemented. Therefore, it is necessary to continue developing other forms of access to legal information, including traditional stands in Executive Committees and information stands in libraries. The population should know about Local Agenda and the opportunity to participate in the development and implementation of it.

One of the problems of law enforcement in practice for Local Agenda is that when local self-government is underdeveloped, it can appear to be under strict command mechanisms operated “from above”. This conditions the type of behaviour that it is simply not possible to miss, for example, opportunities for Local Agenda, to “lie low” and inactive, waiting for direct instructions from the superior leaders. However, this type of behaviour is dubious. Delaying the start leaves you open to the fact that the award (resources, knowledge, effect) will go to others, to leaders. Therefore, there can be only one recommendation here: join Local Agenda fearlessly and quickly!

The organisational component of the institutional basis for the development of Local Agenda

As previously mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, administrative resources can play an important role in the distribution of and strengthening of the process of Local Agenda. In Belarus in addition to the aforementioned National Commission on Sustainable Development there are already some “off shoots” in this area. Among them are the following:

- Public council at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Preservation of the Environment of Belarus.
- Public council on the implementation of the “Strategic Plan of Sustainable Development of the City of Minsk to 2020.”
- Strategic committee on implementation of the “Sustainable Development Strategy of Disna County.”

- Public council on the development and implementation of the Local Agenda in Rossony district.
- Working group on the development of the Local Agenda of Lepel district.
- NGOs “Ecoproject”, “Educational Centre on Sustainable Development” and International foundation “Living Partnership”, whose constitutional aims include tasks of sustainable development.
- Advisory council on sustainable development, created by the International foundation “Living Partnership”.
- A website for the Belarus Support Programme of the German Federal Government www.fpb-belarus.org . It has a special folder called “Sustainable development”.
- The sustainable development library created in the Republican Scientific and Technical Library in Minsk.
- Information sections on sustainable development in the Slavic Library in Gomel, in the Town Library in Baran, in the Grebenka Library (Cherven district) and in other areas of the country.



Seminar in the Local Foundation “Centre of Rural Development and Entrepreneurship Support” in Stolín town

- Youth Club on Sustainable Development in Fanipol town.
- Public Council on the Development of Agro-tourism at the Minsk Executive Committee.

The following are at the preliminary stages:

- Area information centres on sustainable development and support for business in

Disna, Rossony and Lepel districts of Vitebsk region.

- Internet network with participation from representatives of the local communities participating in the development and imple-

mentation of Local Agenda and experts on sustainable development.

- Web portal on sustainable development.

The appearance of these resources shows that the trend towards spreading the concept of sustainable development increases and the interest in it strengthens the expert potential in the field of sustainable development and Local Agenda in Belarus.

International Local Agenda experience shows a possible way the administrative process may development in Belarus. In many foreign countries, for public and municipal initiatives on Local Agenda, special bodies are created and registered; some are even called “the Local Agenda Office”. Other municipalities form special departments for Local Agenda, or place duties involving LA21 into job descriptions for specially appointed employees.

Regional Development Foundations or Community Foundations undertake coordinating functions for the implementation of Local Agenda in many cases (see inset). This form of legal entity is

within the spirit of Local Agenda because it allows collective participation in the characterisation of the strategy by means of the work of the Board of directors of the foundation and a professional

Information on Local Community Foundations:

- Local Community Foundations have successfully worked in the USA from the beginning of the 20th century; these foundations are in each state and in thousands of cities and towns of the USA.
- More than 60 Local Community Foundations have been created since 1986 in Great Britain.
- More than 30 Foundations have been created from the middle of the 1990's in Germany.
- Local Community Foundations have successfully developed in Slovakia, Poland and the Baltic Region.
- In Russia up to 2003 17 Local Community Foundations were created. In 2003 these foundations have been granted more than 500 thousand US dollars for social programmes in the communities. The assets of the largest Local Community Foundation in Russia (foundation of Tolyatti) in 2003 totalled 700 thousand US dollars; the foundation gives more than 150 thousand dollars a year for social programmes. 90 % of these grants were offered by local donors.
- Nowadays in Russia the Association of Local Community Foundations is established.

Sources: Partnership in sustainable development of local communities: Experience, opportunities and prospects. (2004) Proceedings of the scientific-practical conference. April 16 – 18, 2004. Minsk: Madisont. Pp. 148 – 149; Bahmin, V. I. (2004) *About Foundations in Russia*. Moscow: Logos. P. 47.

approach in implementation of definite projects, because qualified experts are attracted to these positions. Interest in the creation of foundations for sustainable development in local communities



Local Foundation “Centre of Rural Development and Entrepreneurship Support” in Stolín town

during Local Agenda work has already been demonstrated in a number of settlements and districts of Belarus (for example, in the town Baran, in Rossony district and in Smilovichi town).

Finishing this chapter, let us remember a well-known parable about the frog who, having got in a jug with milk, has not lost

hope and floundered and struggled for its life as much as possible. As a result, butter was churned, and the frog could step on it and jump out of the jug. Another one gave up because of the seeming hopelessness of the situation and drowned ... In the identical legal environment different results are possible depending on perseverance to achieve the goal. To prove these words, we shall turn our consideration to real examples from the Belarusian practice of sustainable development initiatives at a local level.



6. THE FIRST EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL AGENDA IN BELARUS

The Children's Centre "Nadezhda"

The Children's Centre "Nadezhda"¹ was set up in 1994 in Vilejka district, Minsk Region by the mutual efforts of the founders (Goskomchernobyl of the Republic of Belarus²; the Humanitarian Foundation "Life after Chernobyl", Minsk; a Charity Foundation "Leben nach Chernobyl", Frankfurt-on-Main and the organisation "Mennerarbeit" of the Evangelical Church of Germany, Kassel). It is a specialised rehabilitation centre for Belarusian children and teenagers who suffered from radiation poisoning after the Chernobyl accident³.

The Children's Rehabilitation and Health Care Centre "Nadezhda" is located 30 km from Vilejka town in a picturesque pine forest in the conservation area of Vilejka far from highways, industrial enterprises and populated areas. All of these things give pleasant surroundings for the recovery, psychological and educational rehabilitation of the children, also for the environmental education of children.

From the very beginning when the centre was begun, the Belarusian and German founders took into account sustainable development principles in order to give new perspectives on life to the youngsters in Belarus after Chernobyl. Initiated by the German side there was a proposal to arrange the strategy for the centre's activities like Local Agenda. At the initial stage Karl Kerschgens, the former chairman of the Charity Foundation "Leben nach Chernobyl", organised special seminars for the employees of the Centre devoted to sustainable development issues. The following became the foundation of the local action programme: information activity, gradual

¹ Editor's note: "Nadezhda" literally means "hope" in Russian.

² "Goskomchernobyl" is an abbreviation of the following name – State Committee of the Republic of Belarus on Consequential Problems of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station Catastrophe.

³ Editor's note: 2nd generation children are still being born with 'problems', physical and mental, following Chernobyl.

introduction of sustainable development principles into the teaching curriculum and advanced technologies for house keeping. Following advice from the German colleagues it was entitled “Agenda 21”. The document was worked out by employees of the “Nadezhda” Centre who prepared the corresponding thematic sections. On May 25th 1999 “Agenda 21” was approved by the Centre Board and published as a brochure in 2000⁴.



Publications on the sustainable development theme from the Children’s centre “Nadezhda”

Taking a current view point the first version of the “Agenda 21” for “Nadezhda” is not perfect. The main part of the brochure contains articles and reports on the Centre’s achievements, description of local flora and statements about the environmental education of the students. Among the weak points there was an absence of strategic goals, imprecise priorities and a lack of a well-defined action plan and methodology for reaching the targets. At the same time according to the Preamble the Agenda’s goal was not high: “continuation of the work to familiarise and education the enterprise’s employees with skills for environmentally correct activity”. And the goal was reached by way of the “Agenda”. Nevertheless,

don’t forget that it was the first step (the first in Belarus!), commencing the history of Local Agenda in our country. After all, it is well known that hardship is the lot of pioneers.

In accordance with Local Agenda principles, “Nadezhda” did not just create a document containing their sustainable development strategy; but Local Agenda became a living process penetrating all aspects of the Centre’s activity. So, in the year 2002 a “Programme

⁴ Annexure 4 contains the extracts from this document

for the Rational Use of Energy Resources to 2005” was worked out and started to be implemented as a part of Centre’s sustainable development strategy. The document has been shaped by a working group of Belarusian and German co-workers of “Nadezhda” and experts under the framework of Programme of Support to Belarus of the Federal Government of Germany. Unlike the Agenda, the “Programme of the Rational Use of Energy Resource” contains a detailed list of energy saving actions in “Nadezhda”, also the calculation of expected outcomes from its implementation and directions for further work with staff and children in this area.

Detailed research has been carried out into many energy saving areas, even seemingly the minor ones including:

- Changing electrical boilers in the laundry, sauna and dwelling-house #1 for boilers using heat from the main boiler room.
- Changing of ordinary light bulbs for energy saving ones.
- Equipping heating system pumps with timer controls.
- Putting computer controlled sensors on the outdoor area lighting system for the centre.
- Boiler house upgrade.
- Thermal isolation of the buildings.
- Installation of thermostatic regulators on hot water radiators in the administrative buildings.
- Limitation of the boiler water temperature to 60°C.

Water consumption reduction actions included:

- Installation of hot and cold water consumption meters in all building.
- Replacing old water mixers with ball-and-socket ones.
- Putting efficient shower heads on showers and in washstands.
- Looking at the possibility of watering the lawns and agricultural land with harvested rain water.

Between June and September of 2004 under the Programme of Support of Belarus from the Federal Government of Germany, solar panels were installed on the centre’s canteen. Also a new wood-fired boiler started being used.

It did not take long to see the results. During 2005 about 100,000 tons of heating oil was saved. Power consumption in the year 2005 decreased by 40 per cent in comparison with 1997, at the same time the number of children in Centre doubled.

These notable achievements in energy saving resulted in being given special status. “Nadezhda” became a showcase site for energy efficiency at a national level. This status has been confirmed by the Committee on Energy Efficiency within the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

The process of Local Agenda also included other parts. In the year 2000 the “Concept of Agricultural Production Development” according to environmentally sustainable principles was adopted. At the moment (2006) this activity is work-in-progress.

In 2002 the “General Concept for the Children’s Centre “Nadezhda” was approved. It was literally inundated with sustainable development principles. The “General Concept” included such important aspects of sustainable development as “voluntary choice of principles and methods (a dynamic position)” (p. 7); “systemic approach and progression” (pp. 11-12). The document proclaimed that “Nadezhda” is “a Centre for quality of life” (p. 12). The list of the programmes to be implemented shows that all the “main pillars” of sustainable development are included, economic, environmental and social elements. Certain sections are emphasised in the document: “Environmental Education” and “Partnership and networking”. Prototypes of the working groups are established (medical and teaching and also the psychological expertise group).

The Programme “Health Preservation and Improvement” (2004) emphasises the importance of children and teenagers attaining and perfecting knowledge and skills in order to look after their health (p. 2), reflecting: “wishing to make the working process as transparent and understandable as possible for all interested persons” (p. 25). This programme sets a goal to become “an additional stimulus for care givers and parents of rehabilitated children” and “useful for the schools where children come from” (p. 25). Also this document states its intention to create partnerships with schools; have

exchanges with other institutions and state bodies of the Republic of Belarus working on rehabilitation, health improvement and quality of life issues, as well as acquiring experience from other countries (p. 25).

The Brochure “Nadezhda – Partnership in the Name of the Future (the most important aspects of the history and development of the “Nadezhda” project, 2004)” also outlines that the adherence to sustainable development principles are central to the new stage of Centre’s development. It states that the “main overall goals that are at the foundation of “Nadezhda” until now have been the idea of long term responsible partnership, an holistic approach to health preservation and strength, sustainable development principles and a conviction that the experience of information exchange along with team meetings is of importance” (p. 3). Also the publication mentions the call for the “active involvement of children and teenagers in the process of organising the Centre’s activities” and the importance of an innovative approach for development (p. 4). Below is the list of expert groups established in the Centre:

- Nutrition management
- Organic agriculture
- Design and building
- Rational use of energy resources (p. 4).

It is indicated that “Children and teenagers during their stay at “Nadezhda” should understand the importance of the ecology and the sustainable development of the Centre. These are not just words, but a real driving force for all of the Centre’s activity” (p. 4). This very statement is vitally important for all parts and objectives involved in Local Agenda. It is important not to put this down as a formality or that it is ‘just on paper’ which would discredit such a human innovation which, for Belarus, brought in a new era.

Organic processes of production are used on the farming land of “Nadezhda” and used for feeding the children. In 2004 about 93% of annual consumption of basic foodstuffs for the “Nadezhda” dining room was supplied by its own production. Moreover, according to tests results the concentration of nitrates in vegetables grown at “Nadezhda” was on average 3 – 4 times lower then the recom-

mended minimum limit for children's food in the Republic of Belarus. Staff workers from a separate branch "Nadezhda – Plus" took responsibility for this agricultural production. Sustainable development principles in this area are also achieved by involving local agricultural producers as well which results in a positive external effect from "Nadezhda" activity. The Centre, thereby, provides jobs for the locals from rural areas and returns increased economic returns to local producers. Minimising the amount of food transportation (food miles) results in a reduction in environmental pollution.

In 2003 new educational and tourist services came into operation in the Centre. The following year a new service office was registered. It took responsibility for children recreation, seminars and conference arrangements, adult and family recreation, fitness, summer camps and holidays. All these new activities are to be based upon sustainable development principles. For instance, a children's summer leisure camp was held at the Vilejka impoundment. Here we saw demonstrated a holistic, integrated approach to providing outdoor human activity according to sustainable development principles. Based on the sustainable development philosophy the campsite unites several social, economic and ecological functions:

- It provides children recovery in a natural location
- It gives an ideal situation for the promotion of sustainable development ideas
- It generates additional financial resources for the Centre's activities; and
- It ensures ideal conditions for maximising conservation of the existing ecosystem.

A number of important administrative basics of the Local Agenda in "Nadezhda" are stated in the "Management Principles at the Joint Belarusian-German Charity Enterprise Nadezhda-21" (2004). The document, in particular, notes its commitment to the following management rules:

- Every employee's contribution is an equally important "investment" into the achievement of the overall goals of the enterprise at various stages of its development.
- Collective leadership is observed.

- Employees are to be kept informed.
- Feedback is provided; all employees are involved in the decision making process.
- There will be rigorous communication between various categories of employees.
- Further professional training of the Centre’s employees will be provided.
- There will be ongoing improvement in types and methods of work following results being evaluated.

These rules are a telling story of the fundamental sustainable development principles such as partnership and transparency being implemented in the specific circumstances of “Nadezhda”. Moreover, “the rules of the game” being laid down in a special document set a good example of institutionalisation – one of the most important tools for promoting the ideas of sustainable development.

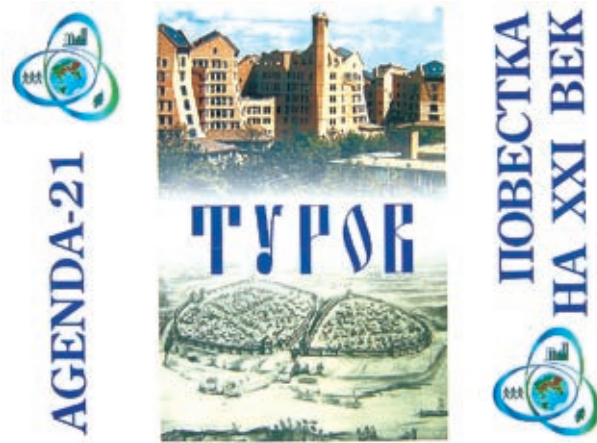
In the last few years “Nadezhda” has been widely involved in various projects, some grant funded, in order to reach its Local Agenda goals. More and more frequently “Nadezhda” is used as a conference centre for seminars and training events on sustainable development. Students and schoolmates, teachers and local authority representatives from various regions of Belarus come here to take in the “Nadezhda’s” experience and confirm the Centre’s choice – the vital choice of a local sustainable development strategy.

Actually, “Nadezhda” is entering a new stage of the Local Agenda process. It will result in adopting an updated sustainable development action plan.

Turow

Local Agenda 21 for Turow with 3500 inhabitants, located in Zhitkovichi district, Gomel region, was one of the first LA21 initiatives in Belarus. In June 1999 the NGO “Ecoline” from Minsk came forward with a proposal for Zhitkovichi district Executive Committee to participate in an international Belarusian-Swedish project on Local Agenda 21 development for particular areas in Belarus. Turow was

chosen as the pilot site. The project was supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).



Turow Town Local Agenda 21

In October 1999 the first joint meeting of the NGO “Ecoline” representatives together with a group of Turow residents interested in the project took place. During the meeting locals learnt about sustainable development and Local Agenda. They also discussed the action plan. After a number of meetings and consulta-

tions in Turow it was agreed what the most critical local problems were. The Local Agenda initiative group was formed comprising the chairman of the town Council, a key person from Zhitkovichi district Executive Committee, the kolkhoz⁵ director, the cannery manager, the hospital’s chief doctor, teachers and workers from the national park “Pripyatski.”

In February 2000 several of the most active project participants from Turow visited Sweden for the purpose of gaining experience of Local Agenda. They visited a waste recycling station and a biogas-plant and were introduced to the idea of solar batteries and how to involve the public in LA21. Partnership connections between Turow deputy Council and the municipality of Istad town were established.

The outcome of the joint activity of Turow inhabitants and NGO “Ecoline” experts, “Agenda 21 for the township of Turow, Gomel Region” was accepted by the initiative group of Turow on October

⁵ Editor’s note: a kolkhoz is a form of collective farm dating back to communist Russian times – some of these still exist.

25th, 2000⁶. The Local Agenda for Turow was presented to the wider public through news-boards and the local newspaper.

“Turow Sustainable Development Strategy assists the town community take its own decisions about the long term development goals of the town and involves the wider public in the real decision making processes and management of town life” was written into the Turow Local Agenda introduction. “Only by mutual efforts and an ongoing future town vision can we see improvement in our lives.”

Turow’s Local Agenda structure reflects the general requirements of these documents as well as representing the local uniqueness. So, alongside with “traditional” Agenda sections (Biodiversity Conservation; Waste; Power Supply; Public Health; Traffic and Transport; Environmental Education and Information) it also contains these additional sections: Supply of Food; Water Quality; Construction; Recreation and Living; Cultural Heritage Restoration; Social Problems and Unemployment.

At the same time, different chapters in the Local Agenda have different levels of detail. There is no description of how LA21 is to be implemented. Just by looking through it, it is impossible to see how the problems identified will be resolved or by whom and with what resources.

Despite the methodical imperfections of the Sustainable Development Strategy for Turow town it does not demean the advantages and the importance of the process of formulating it, and its position in starting the movement for sustainable development in Belarus as well as helping spread the idea of Local Agenda. It could be argued that the role of “Nadezhda” Children’s Centre and Turow town are pioneers in the development of local strategies for sustainable development in our country. Figuratively, it could be said that “Nadezhda” and Turow are leading lights towards a sustainable future for Belarus!”

Activity under the framework of Local Agenda of Turow has born fruit. Within the Turow town Council office an Information centre

⁶ See Annexure 5 for the text of Turow’s Local Agenda.

on Local Agenda 21 was set up, equipped with a computer on which it was possible to get familiar with materials concerning sustainable development, to discuss questions about the future of Turow and to leave suggestions about the development of the Local Agenda. The brochure “Turow Agenda 21” and a calendar were published. The brochure occupies a place of honour in an exhibit in the Turow Museum of Local Tradition, History and Economy. In one of the



Polesie is a very well known Belarusian region with old traditions of food and hospitality

schools in Turow a competition was organised for children to do a compositions on a theme: “Turow in the 21st century”.

The initiative group lobbied decision makers about the construction of a water purification plant to remove excess iron from the water. Because of Local Agenda, the problem of drinking water

in Turow came to the attention of the regional governing body that had money for the construction of the plant. As a result, the plant was constructed and put into operation in 2001.

Turow has attracted the attention of the country’s leaders and a national fete “Day of Belarusian Writing” was organised there in 2004, because of which streets were improved and there were some cultural and social structures built at this time⁷.

These first achievements have given confidence in our abilities. Irina Sergeichik, a member of the Local Agenda initiative group, started work on rescuing a Turow hospital that was to be closed. Together with her colleagues, she prepared a draft on the restructuring of

⁷ Editor’s Note: major infrastructure such as roads are often not repaired or improved by the state government unless there is a national event taking place in the area.

the hospital as a Rehabilitation centre for people living in areas that have suffered from the Chernobyl Atomic Power Plant accident. A wise expression says, “Knock and the door will be opened to you”. Irina Sergeichik has begun to raise money for the implementation of this project. Using the UNDP project office on development of National Strategy for Sustainable Development, she began to phone around all representatives of the international organisations and foreign embassies in Belarus. The Humanitarian Department of the American Embassy, whose representatives then visited Turow and had agreed to support the creation of the Rehabilitation centre, responded. The hospital in Turow continues its work and one whole floor was refitted and is used as the Rehabilitation centre now. It was repaired and medical cabinets were stocked with the necessary equipment. The centre is prepared for its first patients and I hope that by the time of publication of the book it will be officially open and will begin its work.

Nikolai Artiushko, Mayor of Turow became one of the pioneers in the work on Local Agenda in Belarus. Everyone who knew him will remember his activity and purposefulness, strategic thinking and devotion to the Turow land. Unfortunately, Nikolai Artiushko died and did not see town status returned to Turow or the renovation of the streets and buildings. But all those who knew him, link Turow’s revival with his self-sacrifice.

Because of the Local Agenda of Turow, they have started to implement other projects

Irina Sergeichik's story about the welcome to Turow of a delegation from the American Embassy in autumn 2001 will enter into the annals of history of Local Agenda in Belarus. The military attaché arrived in Turow to decide if the ministry would support the project or not. Some cities and towns competed for the opportunity to implement the project. He examined the hospital, asked about the proposed project and about its probable outcomes in the future. Irina had invited the visitors to supper with her. She said, “I tried to make as many arguments as possible for the implementation of the project at Turow”. She treated them with “Bulba pa Turauski” - a local food and other national dishes. It got dark early and visitors started to make a move to leave. It was necessary to say something important, that would move the scale in favour of Turow ... The visitors and the hostess went onto the porch from which they could see the endless dark sky reaching across Pripyat river and water meadows. The beauty of the huge bright stars was amazing. “Have you ever seen such stars?!” Irina asked her visitors. “Never...” there was a rapturous answer. It was then Irina believed that they would help to build the rehabilitation centre.

in the town. The World Bank supported the project “School of Traditions – the Earth of Ancestors.” Under this project information about national craftsmen and ethnographic material were collected, two information letters were published, an inter-regional seminar concerning the development of Local Agenda was carried out and work on equipping a room for the “School of Traditions” was started. Unfortunately, at the start of implementation of this project it was not possible to achieve consensus between the local authorities and the initiators of the project. The collection once it started work was broken up and consequently it was not possible to achieve all the intended aims. However, the most active members of local community are not going to sit still and they are going to continue the Local Agenda process.

Turow together with the Children’s Centre “Nadezhda” became one of the first “demonstration sites” for those who wished to know about the first achievements in the field of sustainable development at a local level in Belarus. The study tours of representatives of local authorities and of the public to Turow, meetings and discussions with Nikolai Artiushko and other members of the local group actions left nobody untouched. After visiting Turow new similar initiatives in other areas of Belarus were started.

7. FIRST ACHIEVEMENTS, FIRST PROBLEMS

The genesis of the first organisations for sustainable development: Gorki town

In 1998 the public youth association “Association for Sustainable Development” was created in the town of Gorki located in Mogilev region in the east of Belarus twenty kilometres from the border with the Russian Federation and renowned because of its Belarusian Agricultural Academy (BAA). At one of the administrative assemblies the association developed its programme of activity and its constitution.

This event was preceded by a visit from Victor Ermolenkov, Ph.D. in Biological Science. The initiative started by informing the public and spreading ideas about sustainable development. Since 1996 Dr. Ermolenkov had been delivering a course called “Sustainable Development for the Baltic Region” on a voluntary basis for students of all BAA faculties who wanted to attend, accredited with a diploma from the International Educational Programme on Sustainable Development from the centre in Uppsala (Sweden). At the same time, lectures on sustainable development were given by the “Znanie” (knowledge) association. Its participants were Mogilev residents from heads of districts to schoolchildren and workers. In 1997 in Gorki a youth centre “Impulse” was created. Under the framework of this 30 local schoolchildren each year were involved in intensive training on sustainable development. The “Impulse” youth group which was joined by a large number of BAA students combined theoretical lessons with visits to local environmentally dangerous places. This activity was also part of what led to the creation of the “Association for Sustainable Development”.

Because of bureaucratic complexities, the “Association for Sustainable Development” has not been registered. Nevertheless, work done by its participants was significant and it was highly appreciated and supported by representatives of the local community. Because they had access to the research facilities of BAA the Association has performed environmental outings which carried out chemical, physical

and biological analysis on environmentally challenged places and things. Results of these research trips were published in local newspapers such as “Leninsky Shliakh” and “Regionalnye Vedomosti” and in the bulletins “Brama Garetskaya” and “Nota Bene” published by the regional resource centre “Kola Siabrou” (“Circle of Friends”). Areas of study for the workers of the “Association for Sustainable Development” were Orshanskoe Lake, Tushkovo complex, cleaning installations for the town, the regional system of waste management and a small river Kopylka that flows in the town. After each research trip, recommendations to remedy the situation were prepared and given to representatives of the local authorities.



At one of the Scientific Caf  on Sustainable Development sessions

In May 2000 in Gorki a residential conference on sustainable development was organised. Guests of the event, Sheelagh Graham and John Callaghan, later became heads of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). They spoke at the meeting. The letter of introduction

to participants of the camp was sent by the head of the Baltic University Programme for Sustainable Development Professor Lars Ryd n from Sweden. The planned activities during the camp were the following:

- Interdisciplinary inspection of Orshanskoe Lake. Five groups of students and schoolchildren guided by experts and teachers participated in this work. “Diagnosis” of the lake was a complex problem and based on this, suggestions for how to ameliorate the revealed problems were prepared and directed to a district executive committee.
- “The Green Disco”.

- Sessions of the club “Chto? Gde? Kogda?” (“What? Where? When?”) on sustainable development topics.
- Lectures and excursions networking with local sustainable development experts.
- A final concert organised with the participation of local NGOs.

Supported by the Regional Department of Education, “Association for Sustainable Development” members have developed a programme “Schools on sustainable development principles”. This programme was a prototype of the present-day School Agenda 21. Its main task was the creation of an informative environment on sustainable development issues for schoolchildren. Creation of a Sustainable Development Council comprised of teachers and pupils became one of the elements of this work as well as defusing of the curricula with principles and examples of sustainable development, energy and water saving actions and separate waste collection, etc.

The “Association for Sustainable Development” was guided by the interests of the local community, in partnership with all organisations and persons with an interest in sustainability. To start with the primary component of the work was informing and training about the foundations of sustainable development.

Thus, the association gradually gained in importance for the development of Gorki town and Gorki region. However, unfortunately, on a practical level local authorities did not use this potential. Very often the association and its members were perceived as “disturbers of peace” or “a group of philosophising intellectuals.” The association also was not proactive in establishing long term cooperative links with the local administration. The principle of partnership did not “work” in full force. Having added to its “arsenal” the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 1997 as a powerful argument in support of the activity, the “Association for Sustainable Development” in Gorki did not push the task of development of the Local Agenda. This element was absent in the Strategy 97, and as a whole Local Agenda 21 was not known either to representatives of the state controls or to the majority of NGOs.

As a result, the Gorki Association's potential did not become a resource for development of the district and of the town. The adage "There are no prophets in their own fatherland" proved true once again. In 2001 the initiator of creation of the first Belarusian organisation on sustainable development Victor Ermolenkov was invited to work in Minsk as an expert in the development of the "National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020". For some time after this activity of the organisation declined.

Therefore, the first stone in the foundation of the future Local Agenda of Gorki and its district was laid in 1998 – 2001 and has played an important role. New teachers and students of the Gorki Agricultural Academy have continued this undertaking. In 2005 they organised trips for students to Berezinsky reserve. Cooperation with the Children's Centre "Nadezhda" for receiving of organic agricultural products has been established. A trip for students to "Nadezhda" to study an operational experience in sustainable development was organised. As well, with the assistance of the Programme of Support to Belarus of the German Federal Government in Minsk, a seminar took place "National and Local Strategies for Sustainable Development" in which over 30 students and a number of BAA teachers participated.

A round table for the discussion of successes and problems with the first associations of house owners in apartment houses created in Belarus took place during my work in Brest on the condominium project which was undertaken by the International Financial Corporation from 1994 to 1999. I remember a speech by one of the heads of a city housing organisation who noted: "Earlier I had tens of visitors from one house, someone begged for something, someone complained, someone offered. But after the creation of the association of house owners we meet from time to time with its chairman and solved all problems easily. We save time and discuss questions more structurally. I vote with two hands for associations!"

One of the results of the seminar was an agreement to continue working on the development of a Local Agenda for Gorki district.

The main lessons that can be taken by local authorities and public structures from this

story, which, I am sure, will end successfully with the development and implementation of a Local Sustainable Development Strategy, are the following:

- Local authorities should more actively involve local public resources in the solution to problems of districts, cities, towns and villages. It is necessary to set the public structures in place and support them to use their enthusiasm for more extensive tasks. Communicating with leaders of local public structures and creating businesslike relations with them for the resolution of small and big issues means you not only expand the resource “pool” for the activity, but also prevent a probable “avalanche” of unorganised individual visits with the inevitable constructive suggestions and complaints.
- Public organisations and initiatives together with participation in small concrete events and projects can also achieve more global ends. This can lead to the start of the development of the Local Agenda, creation of a public council on development of the local community or the opening of an information centre on sustainable development. With your ideas (in written form), it is necessary to go fearlessly to a local governing body. Remember: in most cases, local authorities (your elected representatives!) require new angles, ideas and projects that will “work” for a district or a town. They are waiting for you as partners and colleagues, not as applicants. It is important to show the potential of the project in order to gain interest in it and to show probable benefits from its implementation. In this case you will be heard and supported.

Using foreign experience.

From the concept of the Local Agenda 21 to concrete projects: Pervomayski district in Minsk city

Work on the Local Agenda 21 for Pervomayski district in Minsk city was started in May, 2002 under the joint initiative of the district administration and the NGO “Ecoproject” (the head of which is Julia Yablonskaja) in partnership with the city council of Nottingham (Great Britain).

Participants in the initiative have developed the following goal for their LA 21: “To transform communication and partnership of the district administration with different layers and groups of the popu-

lation (businessmen, public organisations, educational and scientific institutes) to encourage more active and interested participation of

all groups of the population in the improvement of quality of life for the district's residents."



Local Agenda 21 Concept of Pervomayski district in Minsk city

The LA21 work was started by studying Belarusian and foreign experiences. Representatives of "Ecoproject" took part in a trip to Turow to get to know the LA21 development process for this town. They organised seminars, round tables and consultations with the people in Pervomayski district. This helped to reveal the problems of the district and to define work directions for their Local Agenda.

An initiative group comprising representatives from the district administration, educational institutions, public associations and businessmen was created for the preparation of the model of LA21 for Pervomayski district and for coordinating the subsequent activity. The First Deputy of the Head of District Administration headed the initiative group.

One of the most important results of the work of this initiative group was the development and publication of an "Advisory document" in the form of a brochure "Local Agenda 21 Strategy for Pervomayski district of Minsk city". This brochure is available on www.ecoproject.org. The following sections are noted there:

- What are sustainable development and Local Agenda 21?
- When and where did the first LA21 appear?
- A Local Agenda for Pervomayski district
- The situation today
- Priority directions for action
- Description of the current initiative
- Questionnaire "Your opinion of the given programme."

The section “Priority directions of action” consists of eight thematic topics:

- Involving the local population in the decision making process and the development of partnerships between different groups in society
- Energy use and climate change
- Transport and air pollution
- Waste and recycling
- Green areas and the environment
- Water and health
- Creation of new working environments
- Increasing the level of knowledge and understanding in the field of sustainable development.

In each of these topic areas actions are suggested which will allow for progress to be made in the given field. The majority of these actions are abstract in form. Ways and means for their implementation, sources of financing and determining who is responsible is not stated. At the same time, some of these actions allow for levels of innovation and a non-standard approach. So, for example, they suggest:

- To promote the implementation of project examples are the use of alternative energy and social housing with low power consumption.
- To change stereotyped ideas about the utility of the car and to promote public transport as more convenient (and making it so).

The problems identified in Pervomayski district in Minsk city were:

- Low level of environmental knowledge and behaviour requiring an increase in the level of education concerning sustainable development.
- Air pollution caused by exhaust gases from transport.
- Great volumes of waste; inefficient schemes of recycling it and subsequent threats to the environment.
- Bad condition of parks and green recreational areas (the Sevastopol park and the Park of stones) with inadequate gardening.
- Not very good condition of courtyards.
- A big number of motor vehicles and lack of parking places.
- Social problems and inequality.
- Low quality of drinking water.
- Low food quality and excessive use of fertilizers.
- Insufficient cooperation between bodies of the local authorities, NGOs and business.

From: Sustainable development at local level and Local Agenda on the XXI century in our lives – Examples, ideas and experience. (2003) Minsk: Ecoproject. P. 20.

“This initiative is a significant contribution to the implementation of the Concept and a complex city programme “Minsk is a healthy and clean city”. Teamwork promotes more effective involvement of the local population as partners with equal rights in the activity directed to improve the quality of life in Pervomayski district.”

L. Golub,

The First Deputy of the Head of Administration of Pervomayski district of Minsk city, 2003

- To organise training the public about methods of separating waste for recycling.
- To promote the development of environmentally friendly businesses and ‘clean’ manufacturing.
- To transfer knowledge to decision makers about sustainable development.

An important result of the work on LA21 in Pervomayski district of Minsk city became an English and Russian speaking forum for discussion of questions of sustainable development at a local level on the website of “Ecoproject” NGO (www.ecoproject.org). Residents of Minsk and representatives of Nottingham can participate in these discussions. Minsk and Nottingham are twin-cities.

In 2002 a seminar, “Sustainable Development at a Local Level: Local Agenda 21” was held under this project. Representatives of city authorities and public organisations from various regions of Belarus as well as Belarusian and English experts participated in the seminar. Together with presentations from the experts, during the seminar there were workgroups on topics such as “Environmental education” and “Park zones of the district”. Amongst the recommendations from these groups, there were ideas about the creation of school museums for nature; carrying out a series of seminars called “Energy efficiency” for directors of schools and kindergartens; and development of a project to zone Sevastopol Park into functional areas with the creation of rollerblading and bicycle paths etc.

Authors of the “Local Agenda 21 Strategy for Pervomayski district in Minsk city” note at the end, that work on this project created new impetus to implement the principles of sustainable development at a local level. A number of the organisations involved in the initiative group, have carried out or started the following projects in Pervomayski district area:

- Public consultation on a project to restore Cheljuskin Park. As a result of these consultations an “official” plan of restoration has received new ideas from local residents.
- Work by a youth group called “New Faces” on the development of a Stone park in Uruchje district.
- A project by the Belarusian Association of Experts and Transport Survivors on the reduction of harmful effects of transport on the environment of the district.

Currently the NGO “Ecoproject” (re-registered as an International NGO “Ecoproject Partnership”) continues its work on Local Agenda. In 2003 and 2004 under the framework of the Programme of Support to Belarus from the German Federal Government, they developed a project called “Big business starts with small actions” jointly with a German organisation “OWI” (Ost West Institut) from Bonn. It has been devoted to the issue of separating waste and to creating solutions to the problem of solid domestic waste at a local level. Under this project, much attention has been given to the development of information materials on the problems of waste and separate collection of municipal waste for different parts of the population and the following materials have been prepared:

- An illustrated brochure for various layers of society “Waste – questions and answers.”
- A manual for teachers on separating waste, including examples of how to develop lessons on the topic “Waste, separate collection.”
- The children’s book “Separate waste collection: Is it difficult?” which includes the instructions for a game “How tetra packs get thin.”
- Colour booklets on separate waste collection.
- Materials for training workers of housing and communal services on separate municipal waste collection.

Three example projects have been completed too. Schemes of waste collection at schools and condominiums have demonstrated their efficiency for the Minsk city. This project will be extended to other similar facilities.

At the seminars, round table discussions and the final conference participants of the project received not only theoretical knowledge, but also the practical skills necessary for separate waste collection. A visit of the Belarusian group to Bonn was organised to get to know about the successful practice of separate waste collection in Germany.

To attract the public's attention and the attention of city authorities to the problem of waste in the city an information campaign that included a series of actions showed the way through this project:

- For representatives of educational institutions – a seminar and competition among teachers on the best lesson on the topic of separate waste collection.
- For workers of housing maintenance services – an information meeting.
- For authorities, business and the public – a round table discussion.
- Distribution of information materials among the population.
- Carrying out of a sociological survey of the population.
- Publications of materials in the mass media.

In September, 2004 under this project a conference called “Experience and Prospects for Separate Municipal Waste Collection” took place at which the project was summarised. Participants at the conference included Representatives from the concern “Belresursy”, the State enterprise “Management of Housing and Communal Services of Mingorispolkom”, the City Committee of Natural Resources and Environment Preservation, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Preservation, the private and state enterprises on collection and processing of municipal waste, the Belarusian Research Centre “Ecology”, housing and communal services, primary schools, high schools and public organisations. The conference devoted special attention to discussion of the opportunities, requirements and prospects for continuation of this work. Also opportunities for work from the point of view for business, local authorities, NGOs and educational organisations were examined. In order to gather information more effectively participants were divided into small workgroups. It was suggested to participants that they discuss

their requirements and opportunities for working on separate waste collection. Specific proposals for the continuation of the work in this field were developed in the discussions.

The success of the project has been appreciated: the Programme of Support to Belarus of the German Federal Government has supported the “Ecoproject” offer to carry out the second phase of the project in 2005 and 2006. Its purpose will be the scaling up of practical experience on carrying out of information campaigns on separate waste collection with technology that was developed and approved by “Ecoproject” in the first stage of the project. Thus, the partnership of the regional authority with a public organisation attuned to Local Agenda continues to bear fruit.

**The first experience of a School Agenda 21 in Belarus
 (“When the Agenda was written it implemented itself”):
 School # 12 of Novopolotsk city**

“We, association “EcoN” of school # 12 of Novopolotsk city, are believers in sustainable development and we consider that we can and should do our utmost to change the life of our school community for the better. We believe, that problems of the environment and sustainable development are not simply wildlife management, but necessitate learning to live in harmony with the environment, society and oneself”, with these words the initiative group of like-minded people (teachers, pupils and parents) proclaimed the beginning of their activity on the development and implementation of their School Agenda 21.

This work started in 2002 under the initiative of methodologist Elena Kiseleva. She had taken part in a Russian project on sustainable development. An innovative special course “Sustainable development” for the pupils of ecology in the 8th and 10th forms was started in the same year at school. “We can not imagine our school’s development functioning without this course now”, say representatives of the administration and teachers of the school. This special course became the theoretical base and even the underlying philosophy for education and developing components of school work.

On this special course pupils learn about the history and concept of sustainable development and they are taught important social skills, such as skills of communication, team work, cooperation and conflicts resolution. Children learn how to specify, analyse and then transfer the information about environmental conditions, to make social and economic predictions, to plan and carry out projects, to advocate on areas of interests and to understand and accept personal responsibility for the future. The learning experience of this special course is heightened by the use of a game that is based on interactive and facilitative methods of training. The course has an interdisciplinary character as it is based on combining social, economic and environmental knowledge.



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*Brochure about School Local Agenda
21 in Belarus*

ШКОЛЬНЫЕ МЕСТНЫЕ ПОВЕСТКИ:
ПЕРВЫЕ ШАГИ В БЕЛАРУСИ

The beginning of teaching this course coincided with the beginning of work on the development of the School Agenda 21. The Agenda was aimed at implementation of principles of sustainable development and improvement of quality of life for the school community. The task of the School Agenda consisted of showing how it was possible to achieve many things whilst not damaging the environment commencing with real opportunities and considering the interests of all members of the community.

The School Agenda created a strong base not only for the environmental work of the school, but also allowed coordination of separate actions including competitions completed earlier under the specialised plans and programmes. Thus there is a consistent educational system which allows for solving major tasks, such as formation of an active civic position, environmental culture and responsibility, education of conscientiousness and respect for work and the development of skills for a healthy way of life.

By the development and implementation of the School Agenda the pupils can try different activities for themselves and experience a successful situation having gone beyond the compulsory educational curriculum. Senior pupils receive new and different opportunities for the choice of a future profession.

Agenda 21 for school # 12 includes sections, such as a vision of the desirable future, indicators of sustainable development, social partnership and risk analysis. The concrete action plan provides some points such as:

- Collecting material for recycling and making new products from it.
- Organisation of environmental training and education in an elementary school and kindergartens located close to the school.
- Organisation of sports events and leisure together with sponsorship organisations.
- Repair and rebuilding of a greenhouse.
- Creation of a natural mini ecosystem on school grounds.
- Equipment for new computer classes.

The School Agenda is developed for the period up to 2007. By 2005 many items of the plan were implemented or have the bases for their implementation. Senior pupils donate their time at an elementary school and kindergartens delivering a special course “Ecoznayka”; organising games, competitions, quizzes and exhibitions. Kids enjoy meeting their “ecopatrons”. There are two gyms and a specialised fitness room at the school with the assistance from medical services who give qualified consultations to residents of the local area. “Belarusian country nook” was created on school grounds in summer 2004 with the joint effort of pupils and teachers – members of the Ecological club and because to this, the school courtyard became a recreation area for the local area residents.

Through the City and District Environment and Natural Resources Preservation Inspection Service the ecology and information technologies classroom was equipped with new computers. Separate school initiatives become significant not only inside, but also outside of the school. They attracted the attention of the local community



Scientific Café on Sustainable Development after a session of School LA21

to problems in the local area. The standing of the school grew in the city.

Elena Kiseleva shares her experience and says, “When the Agenda was written, it implemented itself. At the same time I would like to unite the efforts of all schools and out-of-school institutions where similar work has happened,

to create an information network, to exchange experience.”

On the foundation of the School Agenda tangible thematic projects demanded both by the school and the local community began to emerge and be implemented. Among them are the following:

- A project to create an environmental summer work camp.
- A project on to create a centre for environmental monitoring and nature conservation activity.
- Nature protection projects at kindergartens # 31 and # 33 and at an elementary school called respectively the “World of the Nature and the World of Childhood”, “Paradise garden,” and the “Young Ecologist.”
- Practical research projects called “Green Shield of the Local Area” and “Let’s Protect our Square!”
- A complex project called “Flora Monitoring in the School Area.”
- A regional tourist project in cooperation with the Malaya Sitnya secondary school of Polotsk district.
- A work project “Youth for the Cleanliness of the City of Novopolotsk.”
- The study of a local folk project following the route “From Ivansky Island to Jakimanskaya Road.”

- A cooperative project with the house management # 5 for housing and communal services for completion of a courtyard near the school.
- A project to create a pond and rock garden in the school grounds.

During the years of implementing the School Agenda the experience of teaching the course “Sustainable development” and the Local Agenda development was compiled. A small sustainable development library was also created; the selection of computer programmes and videos on environmental subjects were collected. Links with a number of organisations and institutions dealing with sustainable development were established. The themes of sustainable development gradually fed into other subjects including mathematics and history.

The first School Agenda gained the interest of other educational institutions, such as schools and grammar schools, vocational work centres and universities. Headmasters shared their opinion about School Agenda: “This form of work has big potential. We can unite all parts of our school activity in a common strategy that will allow us to remove duplication, to concentrate on the primary issue, to increase work efficiency and to involve new resources”.

From the point of view of the outcomes, other educational and cultural institutions (for example, libraries or cultural houses) can play a more important role in the work on sustainable development based on what the schools have done. It is a question of changing these institutions into “centres of sustainable development for local communities”. Similar practices are shown in foreign countries. This sequence of events can often be linked with any existing conditions. So, for example, because of a reduction in pupil numbers at rural schools rooms could be used for other needs of the local community. In a number of projects in Lithuania and Poland in cases such as these at schools, they arranged an Internet club, a room for sewing circles or a room for voluntary workers. In a separate vacant outbuilding of one of the rural schools in Lithuania they equipped a modern sauna and a laundry, and a room for small family holidays with a kitchen equipped with all the necessary mechanical equip-

ment. Showing us this outcome, the owners were very proud and said that it was their first solo project for which they had written the application and got funding for it from the European Union.



Reflecting on mistakes: Dzerzhinsk town

The quotation from the article above summarised annual work under the Local Agenda in the Dzerzhinsk town of the Minsk region. It began in 2002 following the suggestion of Youth group the “Ecological Initiative Belaya Rus”. Representatives of ISAR, Inc (USA) supported the project.

In summer 2002 in Dzerzhinsk the round table “For common aims, have united efforts” took place. Taking part in the round table discussions were representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Preservation of the Environment of the Republic of Belarus, the Regional Inspection of Natural Resources and Preservation of the Environment of Dzerzhinsk District, the NGO “Ecological Initiative Belaya Rus”, the UNDP, the management of the project “Development and Implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable

“The LA21 programme is telling us how to act locally using world experiences for replication and implementation of the principles of sustainable development at the level of a city, a town, a district or a region. To act based on specific local realities for the resolution of local problems but within the context of the global significance of that decision.” (Article “Following the Routes of Local Agenda 21” in the social and political newspaper of Dzerzhinsk town “Stsiag Kastrychnika”, July 25th, 2003, # 49).

Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020”, public associations such as the “International Academy of Ecology” and “Eco-dom”, experts and local residents. These

people, having identified a number of problem areas to work on under LA21, discussed methodological and organisational issues for beginning the work on the Local Agenda for Dzerzhinsk and the particular circumstances in the town. Participants listened to tails of experience on Local Agenda development in Belarus and from abroad, received information materials “What is Local Agenda 21 and why should you create it” with descriptions of examples of creation and implementation of LA21 in the cities and towns of Estonia. A working group for the Local Agenda was organised.

However, this action was not enough for local residents to continue work on the Local Agenda without assistance. As a result of the absence of a local public organisation or a local leader who would undertake this initiative, and insufficient information and training work with the population together with a passive attitude by local authorities to the new cause the work on the Local Agenda stopped for almost a year.

In 2003 the NGO “Ecological Initiative Belaya Rus”, supported by ISAR, Inc. continued the work in Dzerzhinsk afresh. It resulted in the document “Local Agenda 21 of Dzerzhinsk Town” which nevertheless has not had any practical impact on a single life in the town. The correct words written by experts from Minsk, have not found the response by the townspeople or by local authorities, and remain purely good wishes on paper. It is a lesson too. A lesson which teaches, which mistakes it is necessary to avoid and how to do so; what is correct and what to give priority to. Here are some of the conclusions:

- An important condition for the success of LA21 is full support of the Local Agenda process by a local leader and the presence of a team of like-minded people.
- People can accept a Local Agenda written by external experts as a formal document but in which there is no trust.
- Wide informational and explanatory work should precede the work on the document of the Local Agenda, otherwise “seeds will fall on stony ground.”

- Short term, fragmented, single actions with the name “Local Agenda”, most probably are doomed to failure. Not accidentally, one of the keywords in this work is the word “strategy.”
- The Local community (at least an active group of the population) should be ready for the Local Agenda, should feel interest to this work and should become its authors and the implementers.

An optimist would say, “Bad experience is also an experience”. And it is true to say that no work passes without leaving its mark. Working on Local Agenda some people have gained new knowledge, others have made new friends, and a third group has dared to make changes. The International public association “Education without Borders” (the head of which is Galina Weremeichik) is developing projects concerning education for sustainable development in Dzerzhinsk now. In the opinion of representatives of the association, the town has a good chance of restarting its Local Agenda activity.

8. YOU WON'T SUCCEED WITHOUT TRYING

“We are all responsible for the development of our district!” Zapad district in Minsk city

A project for a LA21 strategy for local area Zapad in Minsk city appeared due to the joint initiative of the Public association Educational Centre “POST” (the chairman of the Board is Dmitry Karpievich) and the local community. The process started in November 2003 to implement a project for the creation of a Public club “Zapad” in the local area and to do so by holding two meetings of residents for defining the requirements of the community.

In 2004, these suggestions were published under the name “Offers for the Project of the Local Agenda 21 Strategy for the local

area Zapad in Minsk City” (an Advisory Document under the Framework of the UN Sustainable Development Declaration and of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020)” in a special release of the bulletin “Zapad 21”. It was discussed by experts and sent to representatives

“All of us, residents of the local area, representatives of public organisations, heads of industrial enterprises and authorities are responsible for the improvement of welfare in our local area, for the solution of its problems and development of its economy and social environment.

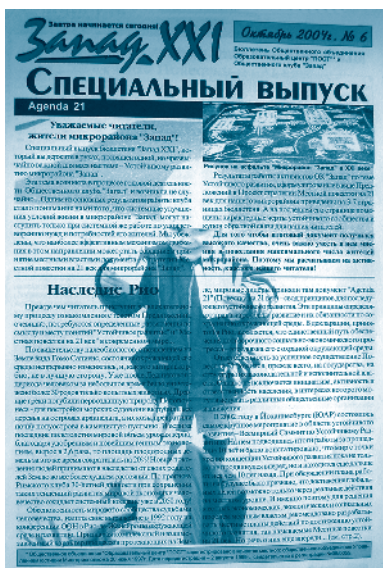
Wide discussion of these offers and acceptance of the final version of the Project for the Strategy will allow for the creation of a common vision and of objectives, ongoing movement which will lead to improvements in quality of life for all community members in the local area “Zapad”.

Extracts of the “Offers for the Project of the Local Agenda 21 Strategy for the Local area Zapad in Minsk City. (An Advisory Document under the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Declaration and of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020)”

of the district administration. Extracts from this document can be rather useful for future developers of Local Agenda¹.

At the present time, implementation of the Local Agenda in the local area “Zapad” doesn't work to its full potential, but it has already shown positive results. The list of problems in the local area

¹ See Annexure 6.



Local Agenda 21 of the Zapad local area in Minsk city

was given to the governing body of the Frunze district and many problems from this list are already solved. We can say that integration of public initiative and the plans of local bodies in the “Zapad” local area have been started.

**“We begin with the environment”:
Zaslavl town**

The work started in Zaslavl town in the Minsk region in 2004 by the International public association “Ecoproject” (headed by Lyudmila Yelizarova) and it had many features of Local Agenda 21. “Zaslavl-Ecopolis” was the name of the project, implemented with the support of USAID through the Foundation Eurasia under the framework of the programme “Sup-

port of NGOs’ Initiatives of the Republic of Belarus by Implementation of Local Environmental Plans and Plans for Development of Eco Tourism”. Inhabitants of Zaslavl, deputies of the town Council and representatives of official bodies all actively participated in the project.

Tasks of the project were divided into four groups:

1. The Research group

1.1 Analysis of the main chapters of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD 2020) with reference to Zaslavl’s development

1.2 Analysis of town planning and conservation plans and projects for the town, the district, the Minsk conurbation and the republic for selection of strategic priorities for Zaslavl

- 1.3 Gathering and analysing of information on:
- Environment and resources in the researched territory.
 - Sources of pollution and zones of environmental risk.

– Presence and “readiness” of nature sanctuaries, historical, cultural and architectural monuments.

1.4 Performing necessary additional research

1.5 Determination of social, town planning and ecotourism's values for areas and territories

1.6 Identifying of ecologically disputed situations

1.7 Development of ecological recommendations on:

– Improvement of the quality of the town's environment and the environment of the nearest areas.

– Increasing ecotourism's attraction for the Zaslavl area.

– Maintenance of the environmental safety of the population.

– Reduction of environmental contamination of the town and suburbs.

– Development of ecological preferences and restrictions for town planning decisions on the reconstruction and development of the town.

– Development of social businesses in the field of ecotourism, long term and short term rest and health improvement for the population.

“By creating solutions to different problems, such as social, economic etc., environmental problems are taken into account, but they do not play the main role in the final decision making. That is why environmental problems are so difficult to solve. Efforts of humanity in the preservation of the environment are inadequate against the developing scales of degradation caused by the human race and its influence on the planet. It undermines the basis of the continued physical existence of our race. To improve environmental conditions of a city it is necessary to involve the public”.

Valentine Sitnik,

Chairman of Zaslavl Town Executive Committee

Extracts from the preamble of the brochure: Ekoproekt / Eco-Project, (2004) Public programme of ecological reconstruction of Zaslavl town and adjoining territories Minsk.

Ekoproekt.

2. The Organisational group

2.1 Preparation and carrying out of the following actions:

– Holding of “round tables” and public hearings on the role of the local community **in the development of the sustainable development strategy for the town** (*bolded by the author – A.S.*); in the solution to environmental problems, the opportunity and

urgency of ecotourism's development and on the creation of a public ecological council. This council would unite the legal and physical faces sharing an agreed environment strategy for the town's development.

– Working meetings on the development of 1) a coordinated programme for the ecological reconstruction of Zaslavl town and on development of ecotourism; 2) the structure and the contents of an environmental and tourist guidebook for Zaslavl.

– Presentation of the brochures “Public Programme of Environmental Reconstruction of Zaslavl” and the “Environmental and Tourist Guidebook”.

3. The Information group

- Analysis of data from the research report and development of the first edition of the brochure the “Environmental and Tourist Guidebook”.
- Development of the public programme of environmental reconstruction of the town.
- Coordination with interested persons and organisations of texts for brochures.
- Analysis of suggestions and remarks about the guidebook and the programme, proof reading of the text and preparing the publication.
- Duplicating of brochures.

4. The Practical group (carrying out large environmental actions).

Published under this project the “Public Programme of Environmental Reconstruction of Zaslavl and Neighbouring Territories” includes a number of characteristics of Local Agenda 21.

The chapter “Increasing the role of the public in making of environmentally relevant decisions” contains quotations from the documents concerning sustainable development. In the chapter the authors give a review of positive experiences of civil participation in the solution to problems of local communities.

The chapter “Tendencies of social development and ecological policy at global, national and regional levels” covers briefly the matter

of the appearance and expansion of the “sustainable development” concept in the world and in Belarus. Town planning documents for deeming the place and role of Zaslavl and its zone in the system of inhabited and natural areas of the Minsk region are also analysed in this chapter. A flow chart of a technique for environmental strategic development and an environmental planning model for the organisation of Minsk are also given there.

The largest part of the brochure is the chapter “Pollution and degradation of the environment of the Zaslavl zone and recommendations for the optimisation of environmental and tourist benefits of the natural complex (independent and professional experts’ opinion)”. It ends with a “List of research and design works, recommendations and actions necessary for sound decision making on the development of the Zaslavl zone (independent and professional experts’ opinion)”. The brochure is illustrated with colour photos of public environmental actions and environmental “hot spots”.

The authors of the brochure note in the chapter “Proposals from the public on the environmental rebuilding of Zaslavl and its zone” that “originality of the environmental programme exists because of its “public” character. Except for the independent and professional experts’ opinion, the brochure reflects the wishes of residents, their statements about opportunities for town development, ecotourism and solutions to environmental problems” (p. 35). Questioning of the townspeople was undertaken for this purpose under the framework of the project. Some statements are given below.

Some statements of Zaslavl inhabitants contained in the brochure “The Public Programme of Environmental Rebuilding of Zaslavl and Neighbouring Territories”, 2004

Natalia Shadura: “To increase the ecotourism potential of the Zaslavl zone it is expedient to develop and supply so called “health walks”, between 40 and 60 minutes long, walks with beautiful, picturesque backdrops with a clean environment. For elderly and infirm people it is necessary to supply resting places”.

“From archival documents it is known, that in Zaslavl there was once a natural medicinal spa. It is necessary to study this matter in more detail and if in the zone there are proper resources available, it is necessary to work out their sensible use”.

Elena Kolas: "Zaslavl needs a gardener and people need vitamins in large quantities. ... and if we plant a public garden every interested person can take advantage of its fruits ... In a country which lived through the Chernobyl disaster, it is necessary to plant fruit trees. Pectin is necessary for clearing the body of radioactive particles and beauty is necessary for the good of people's soul. In fact, the garden is beautiful both during blossom time and when fruit bearing and in winter its fruits will save many people from vitamin deficiency. There are examples such as a city garden in Jurmala, plantations in the Crimea, Moldova, Ukraine, etc."

Galina Aksjutchyts: "They build roads for us for cars but there are not enough pavements and pedestrian crossings".

"Why don't we think about pedestrians and lay beautiful, green mature avenues where there is no motor transport and it is pleasant for people to walk (and it will be good for health too). Developing this idea it would also be possible to go for long distances by bicycle as is the case in many European towns. But it is necessary to put in cycle paths, because parallel movement of bicyclists and motor transport is dangerous and harmful to the health".

"In the highest place of the Zaslavl zone construct a viewing platform on a summer-house or of a rotunda type, with a panoramic opening from which there are good views – it could become another important part of the tourist offering".

A group of businessmen: "Undoubtedly, there are places in Zaslavl and its suburbs which are not an embarrassment to show visitors. However, as a rule, these are separately standing places that look good in brochures and picture albums. But in reality there is no good route between them without passing broken fences, dumps of building dust or slums which have overgrown courtyards. In fact, you can not say to tourists, "Look here but don't look there". Therefore, it is necessary to think about routes, where it is possible to look "everywhere", i.e. to create a complete ensemble where the impression would not be broken off into separate parts and it would be united as a complete picture. Businessmen alone cannot solve this problem. The integration of residents, the town administration and business structures are necessary for the creation of a complete ensemble combining ancient monuments, modern architecture and landscape design within individual town areas. Then it would be possible to develop in Zaslavl small business on the basis of ecological and tourist activity".

"When we think about how to spend a limited amount of money to achieve the best effect in gardening and achievements for the town, it is our opinion that it is necessary to organise town, street and local area contests for the best designed landscape for a courtyard or public area. In addition, you should spend money for prizes and celebratory events for winners. It would wake up people's competitive passion, residents would have an idea that can bring them together and the town would become more comfortable and clean. Everything that is made by someone's own hands is looked after better, than something made by somebody else. The money spent would be repaid a hundredfold".

"It is necessary to develop a project for an "Aqua Park" and to give private business an opportunity to implement it ..."

"The idea of the creation of an economic free zone for development of ecological and tourist activity appears more and more often".

At my meetings with the administration of Zaslavl Executive Committee we discussed the prospects of continuing the work on Local Agenda in the town. Representatives of the local authorities confirmed an interest in the development of a high level sustainable development strategy for Zaslavl. The work of the international NGO "Ecoproject" was appreciated as a positive preparation stage for the future Local Agenda. At the same time the exchange of opinions has shown, that the "bridge" between public initiatives and town authorities in Zaslavl is still fragile. The things to be done in Zaslavl now are strengthening of partnerships, increasing the number of townfolk involved in this activity, strengthening of the educational part of the work and creation in the town of an information centre and a sustainable development youth club.

Starting our Local Agenda 21 through a festival: Kopatkevichi town

"You should be prepared for success". These sayings occur, when you begin the story about the sustainable development initiatives implemented in the small town Kopatkevichi, Petrikov district, Gomel region. It is a unique place for the Belarusian Polesye². The chairman of the Council Alexander Popok and his fellow believers, whilst solving the daily problems of a normal town and supporting the first initiatives of local residents tried to find small

"Owing to work on the Local Agenda life in the town has been invigorated. Our town is our house. How we shall develop it and live here depends only on us."

Alexander Popok,

Chairman of Kopatkevichi Town Council

A quotation from: Call of Polesye – the first steps towards sustainable development. (2004) Newsletter of Ekovita NGO. World Bank project. Minsk: Ekovita.

² Editor's note: One of the largest European swampy areas and widely acknowledged by scholars as a region where the oldest elements of ethnography and culture of Eastern Slavs are present.

additional resources for development and prepared for a meeting with the initiative of the NGO “Ecovita” (headed by Galina Palskova), together with representatives of the World Bank and the UNDP in Belarus. Not many Belarusian places can be proud of similar partners in their joint projects today.

The head of “Ecovita” offered to begin work together with the local authorities on a Local Agenda. As a result a project was developed which in 2004 became one of the winners of the small grants programme of the World Bank. The idea of the project was to

“I want Kopatkevichi to always be quiet and the kind settlement which is wrapped in mystery. Let them say it is a village, but we don’t need more. It terrifies me that Kopatkevichi could be a town with a production plant or a factory. So what? I would have no good memories but only bad ones. The river would be dirty, fish would disappear, green banks would be rust-coloured and the air would be polluted. I love you, my home Kopatkevichi. We must keep the beauty of Kopatkevichi’s nature not only for us, but for future generations too” (Natalya Sliadouskaya, 9th form).

“It is necessary to plant trees in some streets. On a sunny day they will shelter us from the heat. We need to make small footpaths, convenient for people. It would be good to supply benches and to make children’s playgrounds, but it is not the main aim. The main aim is to let young people stay in Kopatkevichi. It is terrible to think that Kopatkevichi could become a dying village where only old people will live. This seems to be the future. To avoid it, we need to open all the closed businesses and create workplaces. Only then the village will have enough money to change something. In fact, it is necessary just a little – simply to put things in order. Our main assets are the beauty of the nature and the kind and hardworking people” (Volkova Anna, 8th form).

stimulate work on sustainable development by preparing for and carrying out an international festival called “Call of the Polesye”.

The first event was a general meeting of heads of the hospital, the aged care facility, schools, industrial enterprises, representatives of Council of veterans and of the local Council of deputies. At the meeting they discussed how to implement the project “Call of Polesye” and the development of Local Agenda 21. At

the conclusion of discussions the opinion was that “Sustainable development should be based on its own ability to expand the circle of participants during development and implementation of the Local Agenda. The participants drew up a plan of action. According to the plan, they formed an initiative group for the completion and implementation of LA21.

Pupils of Kopatkevichi high school wrote essays on the theme “My village in the future”. Some fragments of these essays are given below.

A Coordination Council for the project was created during preparation for the festival in Kopatkevichi. It was divided into three working groups:

- The youth group. They consolidated public opinion about the project, searched for problem issues in the area and released newsletters about these matters (7 issues of the newsletter were published).
- The tourist club who organised hikes and excursions. They conducted environmental monitoring of the river Ptich and made a report, which was used at school in biology lessons.
- The initiative group whose primary goal became advisory work with the public on the contents of the project, involving new people in it and coordination of plans and actions with local and regional authorities.

Also, they wrote small projects for the following:

- Ecology and culture (“Kopatkevichi is a blossoming village”, “Clean village – clean yard”, “Amateur film club about nature protection” and “Development of ecotourism”).
- Economy (“Development of the fish industry”, “Growing of organic agricultural products”, the “Mineral water bottling plant” and a “Bakery”).
- Social arena (“Youth workers are a source of local initiatives”, “Female leadership is the basis of development”, “Village for children – children’s creative work”, “Older people are our responsibility” and “Development of folk arts and crafts”).

The international festival “Call of Polesye” took place from September 10th to 12th 2004 in Kopatkevichi. Local residents, representatives of Petrikov Regional Council of Deputies, UNDP representatives, World Bank members, visitors from Poland and from some Belarusian cities and towns working on Local Agenda, scientists and teachers of high schools of the Republic, journalists and film-makers participated in it.

The programme of the festival included:

- A retrospective film show about ecology.
- A performance from a folk theatre, folk company and children's dancing collective.
- Excursions to the grounds of a special school and a high school, fish factory and children's rehabilitation centre.
- The children's environmental action the "Nature's Complaint book".
- An exhibition of craft work.
- A round table discussion "Promotion of environmental and cultural initiatives and methods of involving the public in the movement for sustainable development".

The "Festival "Call of Polesye" was designed as:

- A visiting card for Kopatkevichi whose territory has attractive features: picturesque views, reserves of mineral water, preservation of local cultural traditions, a feeding area of egret and great hospitality from the local residents.
- A forum for bringing together projects and the people working on Local Agenda 21 which created a first rate atmosphere for exchanging experiences, teaching and learning.
- A consultative and research component for the development of the project which allowed the involvement of leading scientists in the solution to problems of local communities.
- A way of preserving folk heritage and traditions.
- A means of broadening the horizons of participants by showing films about ecology.
- One part of a complex mechanism to involve creative and scientific intellectuals and the local population in the solution to problems of sustainable development.
- A place to form a database of partner initiatives at different levels of communities."

Extract from: Call of Polesye – the first steps towards sustainable development. (2004) Newsletter of Ekovita NGO. World Bank project. Minsk: Ekovita.

Brainstorming at the round table became a source of new ideas for Local Agenda in Kopatkevichi. The following suggestions were made:

- To put in place the foundations for development of agricultural tourism.
- To check the opportunities for balanced agriculture based on biodiversity.
- To involve experts in the preservation of cultural heritage and crafts.
- To continue the informative and educational work about

sustainable development among the population.

- To develop educational programmes for target groups of the project using modern technology.

- To develop contacts between Belarus and Poland in the field of Local Agenda.
- To draw the attention of the republican ministries to the problem of sustainable development in small towns and villages.
- To check opportunities for getting state support for giving assistance to public organisations to create video clips about ecology and sustainable development.

At the round table under the framework of the festival “Call of Polesye” representatives of organisations and communities working on Local Agenda noted that actions such as the festival and its coverage in the mass media enhanced the prestige and the importance of their work. They shared their experience of the work on their Local Agendas. Offers to carry out an annual festival in Kopatkevichi and preparatory work on including Turow town and Pripyat National Park in the programme won everybody’s support.

They are planning to continue work on their Local Agenda in Kopatkevichi under the framework of the government programme. The Town Council of Kopatkevichi together with the Rural Council of Valevachi, Disna town and Ivenets County are included in the plans for research work on “Development of the theoretical and methodological foundations of sustainable development of rural territories in the Republic of Belarus”. The work is being carried out at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus.

A model of sustainable development for the village: Komarovo village

Work on sustainable development for a local community in the village Komarovo, Miadel district, Minsk region, was initiated by Eduard Voitehovich, the Director of Svir Agricultural School³ (it was earlier a trade school). He led the hard work on its revitalization even though the village has no more than a thousand people. This work had the basic features of Local Agenda 21. Eduard Voitehovich

³ Editor’s note: The translation here was ‘Lyceum’ which is a high school with the normal curriculum but they also have a speciality, in the case of Komarovo it is agriculture.

is the author of a unique strategy of rural development combining a powerful educational component and the practical implementation of industrial projects which were seemingly impracticable in a village, based on the unique potential of Komarovo and using the opportunity of international cooperation. The model of development for the village, put forward and developed by Eduard Voitehovich and his associates in Komarovo, is permeated with ideas of sustainable development. This model connects the fascination of a rural life and the opportunity of prestige work on international projects, a feeling of patriotism and pride in the “local homeland” and participation in the solution to the global problems of mankind. Experts from Komarovo are frequent delegates at international conferences and symposia all over the world.



Komarovo village shows an example of sustainable development

A bakery, a cafe, a repair shop, a sausage shop and a sewing workshop are all attached to the school. A German partner gave the equipment for the bakery. They plan to prepare school students to specialise in the hotel industry and traditional weaving.

A public organisation “Women for the Revival of Naroch County” was created and operates in Komarovo. It was one of the first NGOs in Belarus, registered in a rural area. The head of the NGO is Alla Voitehovich. This organisation has implemented a number of successful projects directed towards the increase of sustainability in development of the local community.

Under the framework of the UNDP project “Civil Society Support in Belarus” (2003) in Komarovo the restoration of an old earl’s manor and earl’s park was started. The importance of this work

was clear to all residents of Komarovo. That is why this activity became, according to Eduard Voitehovich, “a uniting force for the local community”⁴.

It was supported by the Foundation Eurasia, and paid for by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the grant programme “ISAR, Inc.” (USA). They published and distributed a guidebook “Naroch and its Neighbourhood” in 2004 and a series of publicity cards with photos of the neighbouring rural farms receiving tourists. Thus, publicity and advertising support for the beginnings of the first locally rural tourism initiative was given.

From 2003 to 2004 the Programme of Support to Belarus of the German Federal Government assisted in the implementation of the project “Technical Power Equipment for the Technical Vocational School in Komarovo”. The main components of this project were the development of curricula on technical power equipment and energy saving; their introduction to the educational processes of the Technical Vocational College and energy savings actions by the donation of the related technical equipment. Using the Programme of Support to Belarus of the German Federal Government in the school the boiler-house was reconstructed. They installed highly efficient equipment, a boiler working on local fuel (wood). It facilitated energy saving costs to heat the buildings and minimised environmental pollution.

The Rural Business Development Centre was opened in Komarovo village in December 2004 under the UNDP project “Promoting Enterprise Activity through Public-Private Partnerships in Belarus” and it was the first such centre in Belarus. Its tasks were to supply complex consulting services concerning business management in the countryside, assistance in setting up new businesses and spreading information about positive experiences of rural development to other regions. The Centre gives legal assistance by preparing documents for registration of small enterprises, carries out consul-

⁴ Quotation from: Razam (Together). (2003) *Newsletter of the UNDP project “Support Civil Society Development in Belarus”*. Issue 3 May – June 2003. Minsk: UNDP.

tation concerning bookkeeping and taxation, researches a market, participates in organisation of seminars and round tables, writes business plans, gives secretarial and copy services and works on the development of agro and eco tourism.

The centre was located in a building which was the former office of the closed collective farm “Konstantinovo”. The building has been restored and the local residents helped with this work voluntarily. They created a conference hall and office rooms equipped with modern office equipment in them. The members of the centre and the most active local members created a cluster of economic activities in the field of rural tourism uniting local residents who now give a suite of services to tourists. Members of the centre give seminars and consult on the subject of rural tourism. They organised a study tour to Lithuania to look at their experience of rural tourism development and created a website about Komarovo www.komarovo.org. It was one of the first rural Belarusian Internet sites.

Amongst the priorities of the centre was the creation of several farms on the site of the closed collective farm as this was an attractive investment. First they registered the consumers’ co-operative “Mutual Aid Club of Komarovo”. This organisation allows residents of the rural region to get financial assistance in a less complicated way and with better rates than from banks and it gives additional opportunities to use local investments for the development of countryside.

On the whole, the work of the active Komarovo residents using international grants is successful not so much because of the additional financial opportunities (in most cases the amount of money in the form of grants from abroad or from the international organisations, is insignificant), but because of the competent use of these resources. Eduard Voitehovich and his colleagues and fellow-villagers really use the given support for buying “fishing tackle”, instead of its using for buying “fish”. In all of the projects implemented in Komarovo the contribution of voluntary work from the participants is huge. Colleagues and neighbours, parents and children, leaders and people worked together to put the park in order, dug trenches for the water pipe and repaired the building which was to become

the business support centre. It is necessary to help these people and everybody wants to help them. Especially because, having learned so much from the experience of these projects, Eduard Voitehovich and his team generously share their experience. They speak at seminars and conferences, distribute information about their achievements and about opportunities for other villages and cities, receive numerous delegations coming into Komarovo and organise interesting village excursions. They show and tell in detail what can be achieved if, as they say in Belarus, you “do not fall asleep in your cap”.

In September, 2006 the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of the Republic of Belarus responded to Eduard Voitehovich and his colleagues initiatives in Komarovo by organising the staging of the National Ecological Forum (for the first time in a village). Moreover, a month later, in October, the exhibition-fair of national crafts brought villagers and visitors for the forthcoming holiday to the earl's park in Komarovo. It was accompanied by theatrical performances, jousting and a picnic on the bank of the pond.



Mushrooms like these are growing in the old park in Komarovo village

The leaders of the local community are going to create a “Craft village”, where the forgotten traditional crafts of the Naroch County, such as weaving, wickerwork, pottery, woodcarving and blacksmith's work would be revived. They wanted to train both adults and children. There were opportunities for the further revival of village in the organisation of festivals and various holidays, for example, such as “Kamarouskiya Kalyadki” (Christmas in Komarovo) and “Kamarova – Kola Dzon” (Kamarova - The cycle of days).

They considered how to make the farms organic in Komarovo. At the beginning of 2006 they started the project “Development of Organic Agriculture in the National Park Narochansky”, which was supported by the Small Grants Programme of the Global Environment Foundation. One result of the project will be the creation of a model organic farm. The farm will not only be organised as a closed cycle for the manufacture of environmentally ‘clean’ products but also be used for training and retraining of agricultural specialists.

Eduard Voitechovich says, “The task does not entail building ‘Sun City’, but placing normal priorities on the economy, morality and life, to remove the boundaries between a village and a city, to prove to myself and to other people, that it is possible to become a successful, well-off man living in rural conditions and at the same time to have a convenient and beautiful quality of life. We have a great number of plans and ideas. So, for example, we are thinking about the restoration of the narrow-gauge railway that was constructed in our forests. It could be a very valuable tourist attraction. Also there is an idea to create a working mill museum and we are already collecting exhibits for it”.

Having started by implementing projects in Komarovo they have already come to the conclusion that it would be expedient to join together this work with a sustainable development strategy for the village. In spring 2006, at the request of the NGO representatives “Women for Revival of Naroch County”, a final session of the thematic group of the Programme of Support to Belarus “Sustainable Development of Local Communities Local Agenda 21” took place in Komarovo. External experts and local residents participated in carrying out the SWOT analysis⁶ and agreed about teamwork for drawing up the “Local Agenda for the Komarovo Village” documentation. Time will tell if Komarovo becomes the first village of Belarus, in which a Local Agenda is developed. The competition increases.

⁵ United Nations Office in Belarus. (2004) *Newsletter of the United Nations in Belarus*. Issue 6. November – December, 2004. Minsk: UN Office. P. 5.

⁶ See Annexure 7.

Other towns, small towns and villages

Building the strategy on a scientific basis, attracting experts, studying the experience, asking children: Baran town

It is better to see something once, than to hear about it hundred times. Members of a delegation from Baran, the satellite town of Orsha, were guided by this reasoning when they visited Disna town on a training visit as the first representatives of Belarusian towns, interested in the development of a Local Agenda. It was in February 2006. Town activists from Baran, such as officials of the Executive Committee of the Town Council of People's Deputies, deputies, teachers and businessmen paid a visit to their colleagues to "get to the bottom" of what was going on by meeting in person, and hearing firsthand, all the pros and cons of working on a Local Sustainable Development Strategy.

They went on the visit, as they said, "Not empty handed". They took a draft of an action plan for the development of the Baran Local Agenda 21 for discussion. The then indifferent Baran residents had already had a certain experience in this area. In 2004 the initiator of this work, deputy of Orsha Town Council Galina Matiushenko, took part in a study tour to Poland and Lithuania on the development of Local Agenda, organised by UNDP. In 2004 - 2005 experts of the International public association "Economic Research and Education" (the head of which is Irina Matsokina) conducted seminars about the development of small towns in Baran. At one of these seminars they made a SWOT analysis. It was the first step toward the future strategy of the

Members of the initiative group on the Local Agenda development in Baran said:

"Because of the work on the Local Agenda we have got to know the German organisation "Bikeforpeace" (<http://www.bikeforpeace.de>) and its Chairman Konni Schmidt. This year they organised a marathon "Paris – Moscow 2006" for the protection of the world and a denuclearized Europe. Our town was included on the marathon route because of our contacts with this organisation and in August residents of our town welcomed messengers from round the world to Baran town. Nine people from our town and one from Orsha joined international action for peace in Paris. Today because of the marathon the name of Baran town is known in many cities in the European union, in Belarus and Russia".

town. The development of the project “Concepts for Development and State Support of Small Business in Baran” was the result of the teamwork of the members of the initiative group and experts.

Together with experts from Minsk they discussed questions about developing the sustainable development strategy for Baran. The initiative group decided to organise a school composition competition amongst three schools in the town with the subject “Our town in the future”. The contest was organised to answer questions such as: “Why do the youth leave our town?”, “What is it necessary to do to keep young adults in the town or to convince them to return here after study?”, “What is it necessary to do to bring young families here?”, “What should the town be like in order to be a desirable place to live?”

The competition took place in spring 2006 under the direction of Lobanova Tatyana, the teacher in school # 22 and a member of Orsha Town People’s Deputy Council. Pupils from the three schools took part. They wrote 19 compositions in different age groups. Winners of the competition were rewarded with diplomas and valuable prizes (e.g. fine works of literature, encyclopaedias) which had been bought thanks to the sponsors – local public organisations and businessmen.

Extracts from the compositions on the subject “Our town in the future”:

“In the evening the town will be crowded, and all people, meeting each other, will smile and say, “Hello!” In Baran there will be a circus and an amusement park. Each person will say with pride, “I was born and live in Baran town!”

Alexander Korenkov, 2nd form.

“I often imagine our town in the future. I want us to have a pool which any person could visit. It would be possible to learn to swim there, to meet with my own age group and to find new friends.”

Ganak Natalia, 3rd form.

“I dream, that our small river will be clean and have a pleasant beach where it would be possible to swim and to rest.”

Anastasiya Vyrvich, 2nd form.

Various genres were submitted to the jury, such as a short novel, a fantasy story and various other types of essay. Children wished to see their town beautiful, clean, pleasant and well-arranged, with wide flat roads, green squares and parks. In the children’s opinion, the infrastructure was not well planned in town

around businesses, cafes, clubs, supermarkets and restaurants. Many children noted that “the historical component” is virtually not used in the town; there is no historical museum and a historical trail though Baran is not developed, despite the town having old historic roots. The suggestion to carry out “non-standard” holidays that could involve people and additional resources for the budget was made. They cited the criminality, unemployment and lack of cultural leisure places for youth and adults among the “weak” things in the town. It is only natural that this causes outflow of young people from the town. In the majority of compositions children underlined, that they liked the town, they are proud of it and they want it to be safe and economical sound.

The Local Agenda initiative group of Baran continues its work, actively works with experts, including international projects and is guided by the wishes of children and youth.

***The local newsletter helps to wake the population up:
Machulischi town***

The example of Machulischi, a small town 20 km from Minsk with a population of nearly 8 thousand people, shows the opportunities and efficiency of publishing newsletters for informing people about the development of the local community.

In May 2002 the charitable public organisation “Podsnezhnik” (Snowdrop) was registered in Machulischi. Svetlana Andruhovich was the creator of it and became its chairperson. The organisation released the newsletter “Nash Vzglyad” (Our View) by the end of 2003 and into 2004. This work was a part of the project to create a Public club “Vzglyad” (View) and was carried out and supported by the programme Counterpart Alliance for Partnership.

There were seven issues of an eight-page newsletter and each issue had 299 cop-



Public newsletter in Machulischi town

ies (in accordance with what is allowed by legislation). They were released among the local population, at schools and other establishments. Individual businessmen received each edition too. Each issue had a thematic point of reference, contained analytical materials and local news, interviews with interesting people and information about future actions. The problems discussed in “Nash Vzglyad” pages included the creation in Machulischi of the foundation for the development of the local community, activity of non government organisations, establishment of courtyards and the skills of teamwork. A register of when activities were happening and when holidays were to be held was given, they wrote about the experiences of local development in other settlements and towns. People in Machulischi looked forward to the next release of the newsletter “Nash Vzglyad”. The team of “Nash Vzglyad” proved that amateurs can release a local bulletin that is good quality. Demand for each edition and the favourable comments from readers have confirmed the importance of this work.

The example of the local newsletter in Machulischi is not the only one in Belarus. Behind this phenomenon, you can see the requirement for a local newsletter for a small town, a settlement or a village. Residents of these communities wish to know about the events happening in the neighbourhood. The local newspaper is not enough. It often cannot cover the life of many settlements in a district at the same time. The district is often not close to the interests of particular local communities not only spatially, but also because the news and interests of the regional centre prevail in the articles. Economic and historical factors also play an important role. So, for example, Fanipol town brings in a big part of the budget of Dzerzhinsk district. It therefore has the right to apply for budgetary support of the town newspaper and there are a lot of similar small towns and settlements. Towns such as Turow and Disna are historical symbols of Belarus. They should receive priority for resources from the state treasury for the publication (and in most cases for the revival) of the local newsletter. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of a local periodical for forming a collegiate society in local communities and for strengthening the patriotism of their residents. Support of local periodicals, creation of preferential eco-

conomic conditions for business in specific areas in small towns and in the countryside should become one of directions of their revival programmes and a major part of their Local Agenda.

***Through beauty to sustainable development:
Mosar town***

The village Mosar, Glubokoje district, Vitebsk region, is one of the ancient villages of Belarus. It was first mentioned in documents in 1514. It is well known in Belarus. School excursions and study tours of heads of other districts, cities, towns and villages are organised to Mosar.

The story about Mosar concerns “Local Agenda” as an illustration of how much you can do in your local community with the initiative, purposefulness and diligence of one person, who doesn't have power and doesn't have plenty of money.



Mosar village

A Roman Catholic priest Josef Bulka arrived in Mosar in 1990. It is symbolic that this period coincides with the beginning of preparation for the International conference of the United Nations on environment and development that took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Agenda 21 – a global plan of action for the achievement of sustainable development was accepted at this conference. Josef Bulka started to implement a strategy for the revival of Mosar at this time.

The Lithuanian agriculturist, having retired in Vilnius, became a priest at the age of 60 and arrived in Belarus.

In the summer of 2005 we visited Mosar. We were fortunate enough to meet this outstanding person.

In Mosar he began with establishing areas near the church. He sold his tape recorder to repair the road to the church. Then he sold his apartment in Vilnius and spent the money on repairs and developments.

Thanks to Josef Bulka's efforts, the church is surrounded now by a unique landscaped park, which is called the Belarusian Versailles. Pristine green lawns, Alpine hills, exotic plants, flowers and sculptural pieces create a magnificent tableau. The avenue surrounded by roses, leads to the spring with healing water. The joint Catholic and Orthodox cemetery is well laid out and majestic crosses and statues have been raised. Where the marshy lowland was there are now hand made ponds and hills with pergolas. Ancient oaks have been preserved and they look even nobler framed by the new surroundings.

The initiative of one person gradually drew the attention of local residents who became volunteer workers for Father Josef. Every person coming in Mosar is amazed by the things of beauty made by the hands of parishioners. Regional authorities have supported the undertaking; they have assisted by repairing the road to the village, its streets and its pavements. Businessmen, having seen the first results of priest's work, have offered their help.

In implementing the plans to create his vision for Mosar, Father Josef did not forget about the children and youth. They constructed a children's playground with fantastic playhouses and statues of extraordinary characters near the church, they have equipped athletic fields, made a place for discos, a tennis court and billiards hall. In Mosar there is a sports equipment rental agency. They teach children to play musical instruments. Josef Bulka says, "I want to try to achieve the point where children will get involved with sports and dance with their parents. Therefore children will be under supervision and parents will have an interesting and useful way of spending their time".

A particular story is the struggle that Father Josef took on against alcoholism. Transformation of a once “drunk village” into “a zone of sobriety” is often what is called the “Miracle” of Mosar. But it was not easy at first ... The priest performed all religious ceremonies only on the condition that there was an absence of alcohol in the house. People did not agree with this condition at first, however by sticking to his principles slowly it led to changes. The wine and vodka shop near the church was closed; non-alcoholic weddings and other holidays became traditional. Tea drinking ceremonies with a samovar in the church hall became an alternative to drunken feasts. The basic idea of the revival of Mosar was to implement it in such way as to remove drunkenness and in its place to give people beauty, an interesting life and the luxury of human conversation.

Thanks to Father Josef's and his co-workers' diligence, plenty of historical and ethnographic exhibits were collected, which made an original exhibit in the local folklore museum near the church. The problem of granting to this museum the status of a branch of the museum in Glubokoje is under discussion. With this, the rural museum could get financial support.

The initiatives described and the intuitive findings of Josef Bulka coincide with the basics of sustainable development in many aspects. In this regard, these activities as a whole have features of Local Agenda. Father Josef also agreed with this during our conversations. “Come to us, let us create a development strategy for Mosar together”, he said.

The example of Mosar is also an example of participation of religious organisations in the work of Local Agenda. In many countries of the world this practice is widespread, and churches bring a practical contribution to the development and implementation of sustainable development strategies of parish areas. Belarus has an old tradition of ecumenical cooperation. It is reasonable to expect that participation of the religious organisations in the work on Local Agenda will increase the general efficiency of this work. Representatives of Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelic communities participate in workgroups for local actions in the development and implementation of the sustainable development strategy in Disna

County, Fanipol, Ivenets and Smilovichi. Their contribution to the common cause is often quite essential.

“Together” is the keyword: Lepelski district

Teamwork between local authorities and public organisations on the systemic development of areas “grows” in the Lepelski region of Vitebsk district. This region of Belarus is known for the beauty of its lakes, the richness of its forests and the variety of its fauna and flora. The region actively joins in the “regional competition for resources for sustainable development” but it is still not accepted by all the people.

Everything began because of the initiative of Olga Mahanenko, the head of the information centre for regional development and support of rural businesses. She formed a group of likeminded individuals and offered for regional authorities to join in the new enterprise – the development of the Local Agenda. The District Executive Committee supported the idea. It organised the carrying out of some information / training seminars on sustainable development with input from experts from Minsk. The seminars ended with interesting discussions about the opportunities for the development of Lepelski district, many interesting ideas were raised and they led to a SWOT analysis. In September 2006 by order of the Chairman of the Lepelski District Executive Committee a working group for the development of a Sustainable Development strategy for Lepelski district was formed. The group joined members of the district executive committee, representatives of the public, businesses leaders and organisations of the district.

Together with the Vitebsk Marketing Centre and Business Department of Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee in Lepelski district an information centre for regional development and support for business was created. It was based on the Lepelski Village Council using a zoning principle. The structure of the Lepel zone includes the districts: Lepelski, Ushachski and Chashninski. The goal of creating the centre was to assist regional development and give information to small and medium size businesses.

They prepare documents for state registration of local public associations under the working name “Sustainable Development for the Lepel Region”. The aim of the organisation was bring together all members of society to create a model of sustainable development for the region and to find solutions to local problems. A Coordination council for the development of tourism operates in Lepelski district. With the active assistance of country folk a network of agro tourist farms was created. Animation programmes with participation from Belarusian and Polish experts were organised using genuine folklore and regional traditions “Viaskovyja Gurty⁷” were developed as well as ethnographic, historical and cultural tours. They worked with craftsmen and masters of folk arts on the conservation of national crafts as a part of the regional heritage.



“Marriage of Tiareshka” in Lepel district is a traditional ceremony

Supported by Lepel District Executive Committee, they created an old-style farm, “Lukzhino”, as an illustration of an ancient Belarusian form of agro / ecotourism. The acres for stocking the household are now assigned and they hold regular consultations on drawing up of business plans for the farm with experts with the assistance of the Support Programme for Belarus of the German Federal Government.

They developed an agro tourist trail “In the Land of Yellow Waterlilies and Grey Irregular Boulders” in accordance with the European system ‘Greenways’ and with the participation of the Sports and

⁷ Editor’s note: These are groups of village people; most of them are specialised in some form of traditional music or dance.

Tourism Department of Lepel District Executive Committee, Lepel Regional Inspection of Preservation of the Environment and Natural Resources and the Belarusian association “Agro Eco-tourism”. The launch of this trail took place in summer 2006.

Belarusian TV has become interested in this work. They have shot video footage about life in the villages of Lepelski district. Promotion of the tourist product in Lepelski district is covered in republican mass media, such as the Belarusian radio on broadcasts like “Vandrouki pa Belarusi” (Travel through Belarus) and in newspapers “Zvyazda”, “Narodnaya Gazeta”⁸, etc. This work promotes an attractive image of Lepel region as a tourist area.

Lepel representatives together with local active people from Baran and Rossony took part in a study tour to Disna town to get to know their experiences of developing and implementing Sustainable Development Strategy for Disna County in February 2006. There were presentations from German and Belarusian experts from the Support Programme for Belarus of the German Federal Government and an interesting discussion of questions on sustainable development of local communities at a round table which strengthened their confidence that this was the best way forward. Olga Makhanenko said after the event: “Our purpose now is to develop the Sustainable Development Strategy for Lepel region. Together with district authorities, we have already done much to prepare active local residents for this work. Now it is necessary to study a little more and to develop the Local Agenda with input from all interested people in our territory”.

The Lepel example is yet more proof of the effectiveness of an active approach to local community revival, based on partnership between all interested participants in the process.

***Looking for our own way: Fanipol town, Rossonski district,
Smolevichi town, Zheludok town***

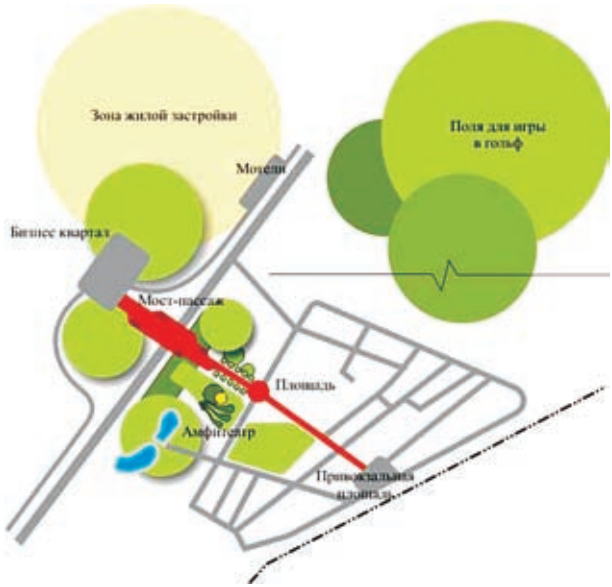
Each of the small towns, settlements or districts named above has taken its own route towards a sustainable development strategy. In

⁸ Editor’s note: National newspapers published in Minsk.

each case activity was initiated by one person. In Fanipol the initiator of work on the Local Agenda was the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Town Council of People's Deputies Victor Karpievich. In Rossony it was the mistress of the agro tourist farm Alla Horen. In Smilovichi it was a business lady Natalia Shilina. In Zheludok, Grodno region, it was a former local resident and Chairman of the Businessman's Club in Grodno, Franz Mamul. The local authorities and colleagues supported them, they built teams and the population responded too. Information seminars were organised and SWOT analyses performed which revealed different priorities of work for the future.

In Fanipol the Local Action Group emphasised the town planning problems of the town which is “squeezed” between the railway and the highway. They invited experts. One of them was an architect, Alexander Mytskihi. He offered an original solution: to be exact he offered to create a pedestrian zone, a street leading from the railway station and its transformation into a wide overpass across the highway.

The bridge will unite the parts of the town divided by the highway. The business buildings will crown the view on the opposite side, creating an “axis of time” from historical buildings to the modern architecture of the business centre. The overpass will be wide enough for restaurants, offices, a pedestrian zone, planting of greenery, etc. It will have at the top a viewing point or “bird's eye view”, terraces on different levels and a panoramic glass cover which will draw the attention of visitors. At the bottom level of



New spatial plan for Fanipol town

the bridge will be installed convection fans producing energy from the constant movement of cars on the highway. They will supply heating to the overpass rooms. This grandiose plan has not been achieved yet, however, the young inhabitants of Fanipol have a lot of persistence and enthusiasm. The youth of the town continue to raise the issue at meetings of the public club for sustainable development.

“*Rossonski district* is the most ecologically clean district in Belarus. It has virgin, untouched scenery. So the life of people in this ideal environment should be close to the European standards”, the project for the “Concept of Sustainable Development for Rossonski District” begins with these words. The Concept was developed by the public and published in October 2006. The main purpose of this document is to inform the wider public about the development of the Local Agenda and to involve new participants in the consultation

- The Rossonski district should become an effective model of self-government according to the self-government legislation.
- It is planned to questioning the population with the purpose of finding out new ideas and attracting new people.
- We are going to use the principles of sustainable development in education. With this purpose, we are going to study models of teaching children about sustainable development and to collect evidence about the opportunity to create a specialised educational establishment.
- We plan to involve scientists and experts in more detailed studies of valuable natural resources, such as the reserves “Krasny Bor” and “Sinsha”.
- We intend to carry out different schoolchildren’s competitions e.g. essay writing, photos, children’s art, cards with hopes and plans of the children.

Extracts from the draft of the Concept of Sustainable Development of Rossonski District, September, 2006.

process and its implementation. The priority for development in Rossonski district is the development of agro-ecotourism. In the opinion of the active people, one of the ways to find a solution to this task could be strengthening of the information centre in the village Kliastitsy and moving it towards playing a wider variety of roles. This would allow it to become the centre of sustainable development for the

local community. An original idea also fixed in the concept is about the creation of a college for hunters (taxidermists, forest pathologists etc) in Rossonski district along the principles of sustainable

development. All the best to the people of Rossonski region and for the development of their Local Agenda!

Active inhabitants of the settlement *Smilovichi, Cherven district*, have often met to discuss the opportunities for the development of a Local Agenda. At first they invited experts from Minsk and carried out seminars and round tables. During this work rudiments

of the unique potential of the settlement emerged, the promotion of which could become a driving motive for the sustainable development strategy. The potential riches of Smilovichi which could promote the development of the settlement, attract investors and create new jobs include a unique factory for making



Valenki: production at an old factory in Smilovichi

valenki⁹, the ancient park and palace complex (which is in urgent need of rescue from destruction), traditional narrow side streets and traditional buildings of Belarusian small towns, ancient Jewish and Tatar cemeteries and legends about underground passages. The world famous painter Haim Sutin was also born in Smilovichi and could also become one of the small town's 'brands'. UNESCO representatives have already offered their assistance. Tourism, including equine tourism has great potential too. The chronic problems of Smilovichi, such as a national highway through the narrow streets and a neglected river also demand solutions... The Local Action Group has included these "painful points" of the small town in the focus for its action. They have decided to start with registration of the organisation "Sustainable Development Foundation" and are currently preparing documents for its registration.

⁹ Editor's note: These are special boots for use in their rugged winters and is one of only two existing factories in the CIS countries.



A possible way to solve transport problems in Smilovichi town

An article in the newspaper the “Grodnen-skaya Pravda” said: “We can see that the small town *Zheludok* has turned from a once blossoming settlement to an ordinary village. During the last 20 years, the demographic problems have become more intense. A number of the manufacturing plants have closed, many people,

especially women, feel the real impact of unemployment. Not only military personnel moved from the settlement, the local medical college was closed.”¹⁰ Having this type of problem they decided to begin work on a Local Agenda for *Zheludok* settlement, Shchuchin district. Experts from Minsk and Grodno together with representatives of the Regional and Town Executive Committees and active local residents began discussing the strengths of the region. The palace of Chetvertinski

“We have every reason to believe, that with the creation of our own strategy for development, the region will revive, it will attract the interest of our compatriots, foreign partners and tourists. Already next year in *Zheludok* we will begin with building a small agro town. That means that the infrastructure of the settlement and the quality of life of the residents will certainly be improved.”

Alexander Vasko,
Chairman of Shchuchin Regional Council of Deputies

princes, built at the beginning of the 20th century as a project of the Italian architect Marconi; the history of Valery Vrublevski, the general of the Paris Commune, partisan movement during the Great Patriotic War and many other things from the richest cultural and historical heritage could become a good foundation for the revival of the region.

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¹⁰ Stupakevich, T. (2006) Local Agenda 21: Valery Vrublevski, Chetvertinski princes, Karl XII. *Grodnenkaya Pravda (Newspaper)*. 16 August 2006.

Ancient people used to say, “All roads lead to Rome”. Regions, cities, towns and villages of Belarus go down different roads with one purpose – sustainable development. Local Agenda is their engine and a compass in their hands.



9. NEW LEADERS

Carrying out the tasks of NSDS 2020: The capital Minsk joins the process

On December 23, 2004 by Decree # 2611 Minsk City Executive Committee approved the Strategic Plan of Minsk Sustainable Development to 2020¹. On March 24th, 2005 this document was approved by Decision # 166 of the 11th session of the Minsk City Council of Deputies of the 24th assembly. In that way the Plan became a part of the city legislation. Therefore, Minsk was the first big city of Belarus

to join the process of Local Agenda 21. It became the leader in the implementation of the 'National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus through to 2020' at a regional level.



Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Development of Minsk

The Strategic Plan of Sustainable Development of Minsk to 2020 was developed by the Minsk Scientific Research Institute of Social, Economic and Political Problems in co-operation with the scientific community, urban services and republican organisations. It takes into account the requirements of the NSSD 2020. Many authors of the Strategic Plan of Sustainable Development of Minsk were also involved in the work of the UNDP project

“Development and Implementation of NSSD 2020”. They were trained under this project and participated in the development of NSSD 2020.

By Resolution of the Minsk Executive Committee, the Public Advisory Council for effective implementation of the Strategic Plan and for control over its execution was created.

¹ The Strategic Plan for Minsk Sustainable Development for the Period to 2020 is published in the Russian and English languages (Minsk City Executive Committee, 2005) and is accessible also on the site www.fpb-belarus.org.

The Strategic Plan consists of the following large sections:

1. The foreword.
2. The place Minsk holds in Europe.
3. Modern situation, competitive opportunities and forecasting estimates of Minsk's development.
4. Total evaluation of some competitive possibilities for Minsk.
5. A concept of Minsk sustainable development.
6. Prognostic and target indicators of the Minsk sustainable development strategy for the Period to 2020.
7. Strategic priorities and specific activities to provide the sustainable development of Minsk.
8. Basic mechanisms or achieving the Strategic Plan.

The concept for Minsk's sustainable development stated in the Strategic Plan is called "Five cities in one". It means the way to fulfil five priorities that in fact reflect "an image of the desirable future" of Minsk:

- The city of health and high social standards
- The city of knowledge and high technologies
- The city as a centre of international communications
- The city which is attractive to business and investors
- The city that develops democracy with wide participation of the citizens.

To develop the section on competitive opportunities for Minsk, the authors of the Strategic Plan use a SWOT analysis.

Many positions taken in the Minsk Strategic Plan can be useful as methodical approaches and as an example for development of similar sustainable development strategies (Local Agenda 21) in regions, cities and districts of Belarus.

The value of the strategic plan

The Minsk Local Agenda focuses on the importance of such basic features of strategic analysis in social development as taking an integrated approach and using partnerships with various participants. "The Strategic Plan allows integrating of priority directions of spatial, public and political development. In other words, it al-

lows consolidating the city community: authorities, the population, political parties and public structures. Success is impossible without it. It makes the mechanism of city governance more open, allows the population, all public bodies and representatives of all scientific, managing, financial and other structures to take part in decision making and their (sic) implementation. It is one of the basic values of the Strategic Plan” (p. 10). It is difficult to disagree with this conclusion.

Authors of the Strategic Plan point out that increasing the competitiveness of the city should be one of the effects of the development and implementation of this programme. It is quite important with growing competition among cities internationally “on all fronts”: from the attractiveness of investments to quality of people’s lives in the town. “Authors of this plan pursued one more important purpose. They wanted to show to all Europe, to the whole world, the competitiveness of our wonderful city. And they hope Minsk will take a worthy place among leading cities of Europe and of the world” (p. 11). This idea can be “projected” to any level of territory of Belarus. Any region or district, city or a small town, village or local area is in an original competitive environment; in conditions when applications of the principle of “give ear-rings to all your sisters²” concerning distribution of the state resources is possible. In these circumstances, it is important to show the area’s worth, to draw the attention of investors and of qualified people who are at the beginning of their career. It is necessary not to forget about young families and the well off pensioners who are thinking about a peaceful and healthy place to retire to. A positive image of the local community created with the help of a developed sustainable development strategy, will help to solve the problems of each particular settlement or territory.

The environmental policy

“Environmental” articles in plans and the Basic Directions of Socio-Economic Development of regions, districts and cities of Belarus during the Soviet and post Soviet periods usually were “the weak

² Editor’s note: A Belarusian saying meaning to share your resources for mutual benefit.

part” in these documents. As a result they were usually written very formally and very briefly and they often discredited the environmental proposal for development. From this point of view, any constructive elements in scheduled and prospective documents on an environmental theme are of value from the point of view of distribution of scientific approaches to the solution of territorial problems. The Strategic Plan of Minsk contributes significantly to “treatment” of this “old wound”. “Regulation of town-planning development in Minsk will be done in accordance with an environmental model for the city. This model provides for the sanitation of the urban-industrial environment, first of all in the central urban districts and localisation of man-made dumps on natural landscapes. Sanitation of the urban-industrial environment must be provided by creating “ecological corridors”. They differ because they have large stretches of green area and municipal improvements. Reducing the numbers of houses and shops and the density of them” (p. 36). It is clear, that the application of a similar approach in other settlements of Belarus, considering their smaller size in comparison with Minsk, should become an immutable rule for architectural practice. It is time to replace faceless new concrete high-rise buildings with construction of low-rise one-apartment houses. An expert from England once noticed that it was difficult to imagine that in these housing apartments could be well-suited for amenable living conditions.

Condominiums and Housing Associations

Continuing on the theme of housing, the Strategic Plan of Minsk aims at a policy of active use of joint home ownership organisations (for condominiums) and that a form of legal body for the real estate management of them be owners’ associations. “Interests of consumers of housing services should be protected by the creation of owners’ associations. Proposed are: simplification and reducing the price of the procedures for creation and transfer of associations for the management of a property complex; transfer of ownership of the general use areas and the adjacent grounds to the common property of the owners of multifamily houses” (p. 46). The current practice all over the world and the prospective for Belarus of development

of condominium housing associations under Local Agenda 21 has already been mentioned. By fixing in territorial plans and strategies methods of strengthening these structures, local authorities create a good basis for their potential future use and of getting the blessing of the local community.

The non-state economic sector and privatisation

The city of Minsk is not just one of the cities of Belarus. Moreover, it is not even just the capital of the country. It is the hub of opinion leaders and the place people imitate. New approaches and innovations implemented in Minsk are quickly duplicated, extending everywhere. “We do like they do in Minsk”. These words are a sort of protective cloak against the anger of super cautious local leaders. Therefore, declarations of active escalation in the field of development of the private sector of the economy in the Minsk Strategic Plan can quite easily be seen as the “green light” for this process. “To create a more favourable climate for business and investments it is quite probable, that about 70% of the population will work in the private sector by 2020³” (p. 76). “By actively pushing the privatisation processes up to 2020 the percent of reformed businesses currently property of the republic will be less than 70%; municipal services are currently 100% state owned and are supposed to be privatized completely” (p. 76). It is an example for other cities and towns of Belarus, isn’t it? And in fact it is possible to become a leader in this.

Support of small businesses

Development of small business is often a “corner stone” of a Local Agenda. The business community is an important partner in the implementation of a sustainable development strategy. It represents simultaneously an active public body and a source of additional resources for the solution of local problems. The Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of Minsk offers its assistance to this sector to develop more effectively. “Reforming of the city economy and creation of favourable conditions for business development can be

³ Editor’s note: Many businesses is currently run by the state rather than private enterprise.

seriously promoted by development and implementation of measures of financial support for small businesses. This system includes forming of mortgage funds by granting bank credits, introduction of simplified mechanism of guarantee for short-term credit, creation of mechanisms for indemnification of risks and provision of tax credits for small business and expansion of micro credit” (p. 76). Certainly, not all the possible numerous opportunities for business support are listed. However, the main thing is the basic direction of this support and the concrete activities in this direction. Very often simply accelerating registration or answering questions, let alone assistance in sharing out arrangements for the enterprises or regular carrying out of open auctions selling ownerless or inefficiently used buildings, can become a “signal” for small business about the preference for investment in your city or region.

For comparison and as a reference point I shall cite the words of the Mayor of Nizhniy Novgorod (Russia) J.I. Lebedev. He represented the Municipal Economic Programme “Complex of Measures



Talents of agro tourism sites owners. Novoselki village

on Development of a Market Infrastructure for the City of Nizhniy Novgorod”: “a significant characteristic of the programme is the basic time taken to refuse directive management of the city economy from bodies of city authority. The basic emphasis of the programme is just the opposite. It has created favourable and stimulating conditions for the free development of the economy by transforming the legal and economic environment in the city”⁴.

⁴ Municipal economic programs of the cities of Nizhniy Novgorod, Saratov and Yaroslavl. (1999) Moscow: Fond Institute of Urban Economy. P. 10.

Development of self-government

“The worldwide practice shows, that achievement of systematic and harmonious development of cities assumes the active involvement in administrative processes of wide groups of the urban population, the consent of the majority of the residents in setting the city values and priorities. This consolidated like-mindedness is developed during an exchange of opinions, discussions and the coordination of positions and interests of various groups of the urban population. Minsk has old traditions of self-government” (pp. 86–87). Someone is unlikely to challenge this quotation from the Strategic Plan of Minsk. At the same time, there is a threat, that the good wishes reflected in it, will remain as only words. To avoid it you can use Local Agenda. It can become the catalyst and at the same time practical means by which “construction” mechanisms of self-government will be applied and problem solved.

Thus, it is important, that local self-government like “a red string” passes through all hierarchies of administrative-territorial structure: from regional level to single courtyards and porches. “The Strategic Plan of Minsk” emphasises in this regard: “Primary importance goes to the development of territorial public self-government bodies: councils and committees of micro districts, housing complexes, domestic and street committees. Strengthening of the self-governmental base of public life assumes development of various social initiatives: referenda, local assemblies, public scrutiny, initiatives of rights creation, etc.” (p. 91).

Cooperation with political parties

Political parties are only one of a big number of organisational bodies who need to interact with the people. Partnership as a basic principle for development of Local Agenda and is achieved at its best when the greatest possible number of people in a civil society and state structures are included in the process (theoretically all, including political parties). The Minsk Strategic Plan confirms this argument: “It is useful for local authorities to carry out more active and flexible policy by interacting with them (*political parties*. – A.S.), involving their representatives in discussion of city problems

and participation in development of education, culture, public health services, improvement of environmental quality, expansion of the use of the Belarusian language⁵, etc.” (p. 89). It seems that behind the expression “etc.” there is the broadest spectrum of possible cooperation between local bodies and political parties.

Cooperation with public organisations

Researchers of the “NGO phenomenon” in the world note that “there are at least six reasons why in any society, acceptance of the laws supporting a strong and independent NGO sector is necessary:

- a. Implementation of freedom of speech and association
- b. Encouragement of diversity and tolerance
- c. Maintenance of social stability and observance of laws
- d. Efficiency
- e. A marked inconsistency in the public sector
- f. Rendering of support to the market economy”⁶.

Being guided by this NGO potential, the Strategic Plan of Minsk contains a number of useful recommendations. They can be accomplished both by representatives of local authorities at all levels and by NGOs: “Available experience shows, that support and development of cooperation with public associations is promoted by **giving authority to coordination councils for public associations**⁷; by developing the involvement of their representatives in the development of decisions by authorities concerning these associations and their areas of activity and also control over their fulfilment; **introduction of contractual relationship between authorities and public associations** in decisions about various social problems. Forms of support like the **municipal order and the social grant, foundation of local community development** for social initiatives are very promising” (p. 90). Thus, the Strategic Plan of Minsk transfers questions of cooperation between local authorities and public organisations onto a

⁵ Editor’s note: Russian is more often spoken than Belarusian – a legacy of the soviet era.

⁶ Tonkacheva, E., Chausov, J. and Cherepok, G. (2006) *Non government organisations: Legal approaches, the international experience*. Minsk: Innovative Fond of Legal Technologies. P.7–8.

⁷ In the given quotation addition of the bold font is made by me. – A.S.

practical level. It aims to develop concrete mechanisms and models for this type of cooperation.

***Development of Local Agenda 21 in regions;
informing and attracting of the public***

The status of the city legal document allows the Strategic Plan of Minsk to put tasks of Local Agenda development to specific city areas. Fulfilment of these tasks is obligatory and is controlled by the Minsk Executive Committee of the City Council of Deputies. So there is a requirement for the “creation of information and training of public organisations who undertake problems of development and implementation of Local Agenda 21 for administrative areas of the city” (clause 5.1.4.) and it seems to be rather timely and a natural step in this work at the level of city areas. In our opinion, in order to effectively implement the said task it is expedient to use readily available reserves in the field of Local Agenda, carried out under the initiative of public organisations (such, as, for example, the public association “Ecoproject” in Pervomaiski urban district and the Educational Centre “POST” in the Frunzenski urban district).

The task demands providing “distribution of information and methodical materials concerning development and implementation of Local Agenda 21 to be made widely available to institutions of local government, non government organisations and various groups of people” (clause 5.1.5), it is advisable to perform this through the development of special thematic regional programmes. However, it is possible to begin this work with simple activities such as manufacturing and putting of “Local Agenda 21” information stands in visible places in buildings of regional administrations, housing maintenance services and in regional libraries. It is possible to place information on these stands about the spirit of Local Agenda 21, copies of the National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Republic of Belarus to 2020, Strategic Plan of Sustainable Development of Minsk for the Period to 2020 and other available sources of information. It is possible to organise this work more effectively by involving public organisations in it. These organisations could probably attract external resources for this project.

Implementation of “public council creation for the most real problems of the Executive Committee of Minsk city” (clause 5.2.1) can also be very effective for partnership of municipal and public structures. At the beginning, it is possible to create these councils as small working groups in the context of the Public Council for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of Minsk through to 2020. To these working groups it is expedient to invite additional experts and representatives of public organisations on relevant subjects.

***Organisational and financial mechanisms
for implementation of the strategic plan***

The same as with NSSD, but at a city level the “priorities and actions of the Strategic Plan in priority order are considered by development of forecasts for socio-economic development and subdivision programmes when the city budget is fixing. Updating the Strategic Plan is carried out every five years” (p. 132). Development of NSSD and of the Strategic Plan of Minsk in parallel has advantage of linkage and coordination. At the same time, other regions, districts, cities or villages can select other periods for action and updating their Local Agendas.

The Strategic Plan has prioritised the order of financing its actions: “Financing single actions of the Plan takes place under individual schemes. Budgetary procedure provides the order allowing the Executive Committee of Minsk city to submit to the Council of Deputies suggestions for make financing decisions for activities of the Strategic Plan before the preparation of the next city budget. Thus, the actions that have entered into the Strategic Plan, all other things being equal, get given their priority at the time of allocating the city budget. The city investment programme is based on the Strategic Plan” (p. 132). Thus, the Strategic Plan is integrated into the system of regulatory documents at a city level.

As a whole, finishing the review of the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development of Minsk to 2020” and the comments on it, it was necessary to ascertain what its greatest value was in the process of

development of Local Agenda 21 in Belarus. Now it is seen as one of the beacons of sustainable development in our country.

The smallest town in Belarus is at the centre of attention: Disna County

“When the wind blows, some people erect walls, the others build windmills”, as the Chinese proverb goes.



*Sustainable Development Strategy of
Disna County*

Disna, the smallest town in Belarus with population of 2,400 inhabitants, situated on the junction of the rivers Dvina and Disna, was lucky to have a Mayor who was among those building windmills. Olga Moroz is the Chairperson of the Town Executive Committee and Town Council. She was strong enough not to “drift”, but to start a new course under difficult conditions of economic crisis, population migration to big cities and social apathy. Olga Moroz got interested in the idea of sustainable development and became its staunchest supporter and promoter. She made a lot of effort for Disna town to become the national leader in Local Agenda.

The press conference for the presentation of the newly published “Sustainable Development Strategy of Disna County” was held in the Republican Scientific and Technical Library (RSTL) on November 1st, 2005. It was the second in Belarus (after Minsk City) and the first published local strategy of rural sustainable development in our country!

Disna Local Agenda covers the territory of Disna town and neighbouring village councils (Zautievski, Nickolaevski, Perebrodski, Iaznenski) in Miorski district of Vitebsk region.

It summarises the working materials of the local residents group, as well as Belarusian and foreign experts on analysing the social, economic and environmental situation in Disna County, working out the likely vision for local community sustainable development. It also contains the actions and precise methods for implementing the strategic targets.

“Every person is planning his or her life – for a day, a month or decades. If a person has a family, he also makes plans connected with his children and grandchildren. We always dream, pray, long for a better future in our personal lives and at work. Of course, it is impossible to foresee everything. And if we plan our future today, the desired result and the proposed path must be signposted.”

Olga Moroz,
Chairperson of Disna Town Executive Committee
and Town Council

The joint Belarusian Government and UNDP project “Elaboration and Implementation of National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020” provided active information, training and methodical support while initiating LA21 in Disna. This work was carried out in collaboration with the Disna local community and the regional UNDP project “Localising Sustainable Development”, executed by the UNDP Bureau for Eastern Europe and CIC (Bratislava). When choosing the places for this project in Belarus, the minimum size of the local community who would have the right to participate in the competitive selection was set by the organisers. “The number of population in the local community should be between 10 and 30 thousand people”, that was the verdict of Bratislava. Disna town was much smaller (4 times!). It seemed that they would not have the opportunity to take part in this project. But a creative decision was found. Olga Moroz addressed her colleagues, Chairpersons of neighbouring village Councils, with the proposition to join forces for co-participation in the project. “Let us write together and start to develop a sustainability strategy for our region! Even more so because historically (from the 11th century) Disna town was the centre of these lands and in 1569 it received the Magdeburg Right. From the earliest times our “local homeland” was called Disna County. And let our Local Agenda be called “Sustainable Development of Disna County”. We are stronger united, we will have more opportunities for development and for

attracting investments”, these arguments convinced those who hesitated. “At the beginning we just believed Olga, without realising the real meaning of the forthcoming work, not knowing what ‘sustainable development’ was. But we trusted her and joined as one team”, the new participants said.

As was shown later, the contrived and somewhat artificial decision on association paid off, considerably enriching the Local Agenda. Meetings of the residents of Disna, Iazno, Nikolaevo, Perebrodie and Zautie helped to identify active people, enthusiasts, who became absorbed in the work of Local Agenda. Vladimir Levkovich, ex-Chairman of Iazno village Council, pensioner and expert on local history, shared his collection of material on the history of Disna territory. He displayed the local sights and photos, which were later

Thanks to Local Agenda, the teacher of Iazno school, happened to be around to help a unique knowledge of nature and the history of the indigenous place of Natalia Zhoidik. “There aren’t any more beautiful places than our marshes! It is like a fairyland! And how beautiful the crystal clear lakes are, hiding in the depths of the impassable marshes! If you visited our place once, you will definitely want to return. You breathe peacefully here; our cranberries, huckleberries and mushrooms are the most delicious and practical ones! You feel as if you ‘fuel yourself’ with some new energy!”

With these words Natalia describes her native place.

included in the book of Disna County’s LA21. Other participants of the Local Action Group also collected materials about the natural, social and economic potential of their place. Some of them provided transport for Local Agenda

purposes; others decorated the boards at the exhibitions in Disna and Minsk with handmade straw pictures⁸ and antiques from their own collections.

Dmitri Sheviakov, pastor of the religious community “Evangelic Church of Revival” in Disna made an inestimable contribution to the development of Disna County Local Agenda and in preparing it for publication. Professional knowledge of foreign languages and a computer helped to establish and maintain communication with foreign partners and enabled the quick exchange of information with colleagues in Belarus by e-mail. Dmitri’s artistic photos decorated

⁸ Editor’s note: The making of elaborate corn dollies and pictures made from straw is a traditional craft in Belarus.

the book of the strategy, and his translation of the short version of Disna's Local Agenda is available on the town's website.

The work on Local Agenda started with training events. Disna representatives took part in seminars in Minsk, training trips to Estonia for studying the Estonian ex-



Belarusian wetland

perience in development and implementation of Local Agenda in 2002 and to Lithuania and Poland in 2004. They also took part in the festival "Call of Polesie" in Kopatkevichi town in 2004 and in a training seminar for the Local Action Group in Poland in 2005. Belarusian and foreign experts from Estonia, Poland, Sweden, Italy, Great Britain and Germany came to Disna. At the same time the Local Action Group started collecting material about its region. As was mentioned, "It was a very absorbing and informative process. We met new dynamic people and discovered unknown parts of our 'local homeland'." A questionnaire survey was held amongst schoolchildren, and then amongst adults. It showed that the citizens were interested in the work of Disna's renewal. People gave some interesting opinions, which were included in the strategy later on. The activists of Local Agenda went around their region by themselves, and together with the experts, collected photos and made notes, reread the books and magazines on the history and geography of the region, communicated with old-timers, fishermen, hunters, beekeepers, master craftsmen and needlewomen, workers and the unemployed. Problems were revealed and registered; opportunities and resources were paid attention to. All this information was to be very useful for the SWOT analysis, which happened with the participation of foreign experts.

The following principles were accepted as the basis of the activity for the implementation of Sustainable Development Strategy for Disna County:

- Valuing of cultural diversity and the preservation of unique cultures and traditions.
- Satisfaction of primary human needs (food, housing, basic healthcare, education, infrastructure, etc.).
- Valuing natural (ecological) diversity.
- Preservation of the environment for future generations.
- Balanced development of global and local social, economic and environmental systems.
- Replacement (processes, products and components, which constitute a threat, must be changed or replaced by less dangerous equivalents).
- Social equality (balance between the youth and the elderly, men and women, experienced and novices).



Preservation of old trees is a part of the care about future generations. Park near Perebrodie village

- Involvement of people in the process of decision making at all levels.

- The precautionary principle (if planned actions may threaten the environment or people, such actions must be abandoned).

- “The pollutant is the one who pays” (individuals and organisations, who pollute the environment, are obliged to repair the

damage for the whole period of existence of negative environmental consequences from the production of goods or services).

- Prevention (environmental pollution and other undesirable effects must be predicted not just eliminated after their occurrence).

The uniqueness of the natural potential of Disna County and their comparatively low agricultural effectiveness predetermined the fact that agro tourism became a priority of its sustainable development strategy. With the help of the UNDP project, an expert from Minsk visited the town and its suburbs to explain more fully the concept of developing tourism.

A strategic committee was created for the coordination of work on the implementation of the Local Agenda in Disna region. It included representatives of the town Executive Committees and village Councils, teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs and representatives of social and religious organisations. Working groups were organised depending on the problems. Local residents received them first in their homesteads. An application for a project for the prevention of pollution to the rivers Disna and Zapadnaia Dvina was submitted.

The Disna youth joined in the work on Local Agenda. The students of the Belarusian University of Informatics and Radio-electronics developed the website for the town www.disna.nm.ru. A complete version of the “Sustainable Development Strategy of Disna County”, Local Agenda news and also other interesting materials about the history and current life in Disna region can be found there. Two more sites were developed about Disna besides this official one.

What other small or medium sized town of Belarus can boast the existence of such recourses on the Internet?

“The topic of tourism” made it necessary to begin designing advertising leaflets, cards, business cards, envelopes with Disna and its regions pictures on them, a list of agro

“We, the villagers, are much closer to nature. We understand it better and feel it more sensitively. We realise that everything in the world is interrelated and doesn't pass without leaving a trace. We pay a very high price for all creature comforts. A set of rules has existed in many families for generations: you're not allowed to wash your dirty boots in a lake, break twigs or pick flowers because they are alive and they should live as long as they are meant to; and you are not allowed to go fishing during spawning time. And there are many other tails, which are passed on through our mother's milk and help us form the right principles. These people are the first to be involved in working on the project on sustainable development at the local level.”

Galina Pavlovskaja,
the Chairperson of Perebrodie village Council,
Member of Disna County Local Action Group.

tourism homesteads, maps and plans of tourist routes. The materials about Disna, thanks to the picturesque photos taken from a hang glider by the town Mayor herself (!), were included in a 'thick' advertising publication – a guidebook of the area and the Republic of Belarus.

It was decided that the work on the implementation of Sustainable Development Strategy of Disna County was to be achieved through specific projects. The first steps were to develop the project proposals and to search for additional funds for them. Among the project proposals, which Disna region presented to the investments forums were the following:

- “Services in the field of ecotourism”
- “Clean town”
- “Saving of an enterprise” (Canning factory)
- “Reconstruction of a wooden fortress on the island”, etc.

The search for support continues but not as quickly as was hoped. Some of the ideas will barely be implemented while others show some visible “advances”.

The work on the Local Agenda, visits to the town by delegations from the capital and overseas brought to the fore some of the towns 'old' problems. Consequently the café was repaired and a mobile telephone provider, MTS, was connected. The implementation of the sustainable development strategy attracted the attention of regional authorities, which helped in the creation of a Regional centre for sustainable development and support for the entrepreneurs in Disna – one of the first in Belarus. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy of Disna County stimulated the development of agro tourism in the villages. The first tourists from Italy and Sweden strolled along the thick forests of Disna region. In addition, Disna Local Action Group, consisting of the local authorities' representatives, teachers, doctors, students and local entrepreneurs, made contact with the international Sweden-Belarusian tourist project. Through the network of this project Swedish tourist companies are going to bring tourists from Sweden to Polotsk. Earlier Disna decided it would stay outside the tourist route, but the Sustainable Development Strategy of Disna County played the

role of a 'magic wand.' The Swedes, having learnt about the work in Disna region, decided to change the route for tourist buses. Now the smallest town in Belarus will meet foreign tourists on the trip 'from Vikings to Greeks'. It is planned that for the tourists' arrival they will organise festivals, where articles of local master craftsmen will be sold, dishes of local cuisine will be offered and folk bands will perform.

Disna 'pioneers' of Local Agenda are very popular in the country now. They are invited to speak at seminars and conferences. Delegations and individual guests visit them. They give interviews to the journalists of newspapers and radio and they willingly share their experience, passing on their knowledge and skills of working on their sustainability strategy. Thus, in winter 2006, with the help of the Programme of Support to Belarus of the German Federal Government, a round table on Local Agenda issues was organised in Disna. Delegations from Baran, Lepel and Rossony came to attend despite the deepest iciest conditions. Besides getting to know the Disna experience on working on the sustainable development strategies, they worked on a similar document for Baran town and questions connected with informing the public about LA21.

Sometimes, pieces of advice, which seem to be quite simple, are very useful to those who are just at the beginning of their journey towards a Local Agenda. The experts from Disna, for example, recommend:

- Paying great attention to studying and increasing your qualifications on the topic of sustainable development, using all opportunities (seminars, conferences, courses, literature and Internet).
- Being particular, crosschecking all data, numbers, titles, names and surnames, published in the strategy book and in source materials.
- Familiarising all members of the Local Action Group with the final version of the Local Agenda before it is published, preferably discussing it at a large meeting and getting the approval of everybody for their authorship.

⁹ Editor's note: In the 10th and 11th centuries this same route was used by Vikings (mainly Swedes) for merchants and pirates.

- Being ready for accusations and reproaches on the first round (...and where is the result of your work? And how did your “Strategy” help you?). It is necessary to be strong and have the courage of your convictions – to work and the results will follow.

10. RULES AND LESSONS: SOME THEMATIC CONCEPTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The range of thematic components of Local Agenda, developed in different countries at different times, is very wide. Accordingly, various themes and priorities, concepts are differently reflected (due to the diversity of the locations) in each of the Belarusian regional, district, city or rural Local Agenda. I shall present some of them in more detail, and I'll only list the others, giving a creative open space to developers of LA21.

Education for sustainable development

The education system, including preschool, secondary school, professional, higher, additional and informal education, should include the principles of sustainable development in the substance of subjects and include techniques. Saturation of this teaching material on modern knowledge of sustainable development will help to form a new outlook, the essential part of which is the new paradigm of mankind's development. The state and local bodies responsible for development of education and also educational establishments have an opportunity to study these questions in the context of their jurisdiction. Public organisations can take part in these processes, supporting them with their resources and utilise external means for carrying out the projects in this field.

Currently in the world there is already available the first experience of the "re-organisation" of education, focusing it on the value of sustainable development. For example, published by Earth Charter Initiative International Secretariat guidebook "Bringing Sustainability into the Classroom"¹ contains a description of approaches for "saturation" of various school disciplines with elements of the theory of sustainable development and examples of sustainable practices. This guidebook recommends adhering to one of the principles of the Earth Charter, for example, for a month (as much as pos-

¹ Bringing sustainability into the classroom: an Earth Charter guidebook for teachers. (2005) San Jose: Earth Charter International.

sible having introduced it in teaching, projects, independent work of pupils and design of class rooms, etc.). Then it advises to go to the next one, then to take two principles next at once – so that for in an academic year “to pass” all 16 principles of the Charter. In the book examples of educational projects for sustainable development in different countries abound².

In Belarus, by request of the World Bank, the guidebook for senior pupils of general educational institutions “The World and Belarus: Aspects of Sustainable Development” was prepared.³ This book is an attempt at overcoming the stereotypes which have developed concerning economic growth as a panacea from all troubles and as the main indicator of progress. Authors of the book write: “The experience of previous decades shows a number of examples of economic growth, not accompanied with corresponding progress of human development. This growth was reached by strengthening of economic inequality, infringement of democracy and destruction of the environment. Owing to better understanding of numerous interrelations between economic growth, on the one hand, and social and environmental problems on the other, experts, including economists, have realised at last that such economic growth is inevitably unstable, i.e. cannot be supported for the long term.”⁴

Rational use of energy and its alternative sources

The rational use of energy in economies is nowadays considered a major issue for many countries of the world. Lester R. Brown in the book “Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth” gives an example of such opportunities: “In Bangkok by the decision of city authorities for one set of week-days at 9 p.m. all the main channels showed on TV screens a big dial of the consumption level of elec-

² Read more at www.earthcharter.org.

³ Kovalev, M.M. and Subbotina, T.P. (Eds.). (2003) *The world and Belarus: Aspects of sustainable development*. Guidebook for senior pupils of general educational institutions Minsk: Technoprint.

⁴ Kovalev, M.M. and Subbotina, T.P. (Eds.). (2003) *The world and Belarus: Aspects of sustainable development*. Guidebook for senior pupils of general educational institutions Minsk: Technoprint. Pp. 8–9.

tricity in the city at that time. Then they asked the TV viewers to switch off all unnecessary electrical devices and lights. Everybody could see the arrow falling downwards, showing the decrease in consumption of energy by 735 megawatt. That was equivalent to closing two average coal-fired electric power plants. Viewers have long remembered this experiment. It has shown that much depends on an individual person, and together people can even close power plants.”⁵



Sustainable practice. Using the sun's energy

Combined generation of heat and power, use of local fuel, wind farms and photovoltaic installations, mini-hydroelectric power stations, thermal pumps, production of biogas – all these innovative directions in power policy should be carefully studied and supported as much as possible.

Control over waste products

Decrease in the quantity of waste, change to the so-called “Zero Waste” policy means not only prevention of land pollution, but also involves recycling for economic use things that were thrown out on dumps before. A programme of waste management should become an important point in the sustainable development strategy of any territory.

We should learn about waste management from foreign municipalities. The experts say, in processing of municipal waste “Progress has been reached, that only a few people could predict ten years ago. Some municipalities managed to increase recycling of typical

⁵ Brown, L. (2003) *Eco-Economy. Building an economy for the Earth. How to create an economy and preserving the planet.* Moscow: Ves Mir. P. 143.

commercial waste (70 – 80%). Territories reducing waste processing to 50% have become an everyday occurrence today. Cities, regions and even whole states have overcome the barrier of 50% by separate collection and recycling. This is the point after which residual waste becomes the smaller share.”⁶ Experts on the organisation of transition processes to “Zero Waste” for municipalities recommend: “In each area where accumulation of waste takes place, it is necessary to create advisory councils concerning its reduction. These advisory councils could combine the functions of the organisations responsible for collecting and recycling of waste. The primary goal of councils should become the promotion of “Zero Waste” in their territory. Control over them could apply first of all to the existing organisations engaged in collecting waste.”⁷

City planning

Outstanding English historian Arnold Toynbee wrote about changes in development of the city of Karachi in Pakistan: “The town planning policy here is thought over well and socially focused. New micro districts are planned in such a way, that it takes children five to ten minutes to come home from school, and housewives can quickly reach shops or a bath-house. Actually each complex occupies a small enough area, that people living here know each other personally. And it is obvious, that the efforts of architects have been to create new life in this small community and they have the planned for the psychological and social effect.”⁸ The account of advanced domestic and foreign experience of town-planning on principles of sustainable development can help cities, towns and small settlements of Belarus to create comfortable environments for local residents and to increase the attractiveness for visitors.

⁶ Murray, R. (2004) *Zero Waste*. Moscow: Greenpeace. P. 43.

⁷ Murray, R. (2004) *Zero Waste*. Moscow: Greenpeace. Pp. 175–176.

⁸ Toynbee, A. J. (2003) *Experiences. Acquaintances* Russian Edition Moscow. P. 45

The expansion of sustainable practice into lifestyles

Recommendations for the population called “100 great ideas for the future 100 years” developed by experts of the city of Nottingham (England) become a good example of efforts in this direction. Among the recommendations are the following:

- Buy apples of local varieties
- Put on a sweater when it becomes cool in a room; do not rush to switch on a heater
- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth
- Buy local products which will reduce transport pollution
- Do not gather from woods and do not buy plants gathered from there.

Possibilities for other priorities

Experience of Local Agendas in foreign countries shows many other thematic directions in the work which has been chosen and achieved by local communities in different districts, cities and villages. Some of the Local Agendas could be said to be “highly specialised”, aimed at the solution to one or several problems. Others have no such specialisation and were guided by as many as possible thematic directions of work. The choice of any of these “scripts” is possible taking into account the precise conditions of the local community. Promising thematic directions of Local Agenda are the following:

- Innovations for services of sustainable development of a territory
- Wildlife management, biodiversity and gardening
- Support of small business
- Development of tourism
- Culture, art, folklore, history and traditions
- Public transport services
- Water problems
- Participation of children and women in initiatives in sustainable development
- Joint home ownership (condominiums)
- Efficiency of small activities and simple technologies.



Inside a small shop in Virginia (USA) many articles made from pumpkins

It is necessary for members of the initiative group or Public Advisory Council on sustainable development to find their own methods to implement their LA21. The best ideas and innovations for regional development appear as a rule at the local level. External experts can prompt the general direction of the work;

however particular original decisions appear from local residents. I dare you!

Participation in the Union of Baltic Cities

A great potential for sustainable development of the Belarusian cities and towns located on the rivers of the Baltic Sea Basin, is the opportunity to join the Union of Baltic Cities. This union represents a network of more than 100 cities from 10 different countries from the region of the Baltic Sea Basin. The Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) was founded in 1991 for the development of cooperation and experience exchange between cities and towns – members of the union. The UBC has as its objective the promotion of democratic, social, economic and natural development of the Baltic Sea region.

The UBC is open for cities wishing to join it. Both towns and cities are represented in UBC today. Nevertheless, despite the difference in size, language, location and economic development, interest in cooperation at a local level unites these cities. The UBC initiates and coordinates projects, promotes an exchange of knowledge and experience between cities by organisation of courses, seminars and meetings and by publication of newsletters and brochures.

The executive committee and Secretariat which is located in Gdansk (Poland), govern the UBC. The current work of the Union is performed by five commissions in the following fields: cooperation in business, culture, education, environment, sports, tourism, transport and city planning. In the opinion of a UBC representative who the Belarusian delegation met in Tallinn, Belarusian cities located on the rivers of Baltic Sea region (such as, for example, Neman and Zapadnaya Dvina) have the opportunity to become a member of the union. The executive committee made a resolution for UBC membership.

The Union of Baltic Cities helps its members by development and implementation of local sustainable development strategies – Local Agenda 21. The UBC has its own programme of activities under Agenda 21 for a network of European cities and towns working with a view to sustainable development. This programme includes various projects, seminars, training events and publications.

The Union of Baltic Cities has a partner region. It is the region of Lake Victoria in Africa. The partnership is established with “The Lake Victoria Region Local Authorities Cooperative (LVRLAC)” to which the UBC tries to impart the experience of cooperation between cities, in management of environment preservation and in the support of the local population by development and implementation of Local Agenda in residential areas.

Since 1999, the Union of Baltic Cities has held contests for the best achievements of cities in the preservation of the environment. Fifteen cities took part in the first one. The winner was the Estonian city Tartu who had developed a City Agenda 21. In addition to the diploma, the city representatives received a grant of US\$5,000 given by one of the Danish companies.

Many cities, participating in the work of the Union of Baltic Cities, have got essential experience in development of local sustainable development strategies (Local Agenda). At the same time, they acted as initiators of some new undertakings in this field.

The «highlight» of your sustainable development strategy

Nowadays the effect of any undertaking (including development and implementation of local sustainable development strategies) in many respects depends on the opportunity “to become appreciated at its implementation”, with the presence in a new project of any special “highlight”, that marks it out above other projects, makes it original.

What makes your city, town or village different from other cities, towns or villages of the world? ... Europe? ... Belarus?

What is your region remarkable for?

How can you interest tourists and investors?



Traditional Belarusian food made by Anna Kitun from Varoncha village became one of their local ‘brands’

Answers to these questions are very important for the development of a sustainable development strategy. To find this information from a fresh angle, a view from another perspective is often necessary. Involving a broad audience of experts (historians, ethnographers, biologists, engineers, architects etc.) and

the wider public in the discussion of this question can help in this process.

However, it is not enough simply to name these “highlights” of your community. It is more complicated and important to transform the “highlights” into a real brand that would work on its positive image. It will demand development and financing of special programmes, time and great efforts to implement this concept.

Components of “promotion” of brands in your region or settlement could become:

- Opening of an original museum.
- Establishment of an annual international scientific symposium on the specific questions connected with history or the present of your settlement.
- Carrying out annual international, national, regional and local festivals, fairs and shows.
- Development and promotion at the markets of trademarks with names of your district or local sights.
- Support of business initiatives by means of granting of privileges, credits, premises and other methods of assistance to business development. These initiatives will increase the strength of the positive image of your city and increase its popularity.
- Creation and placing in your settlement in tourist information centres, where you can buy products and souvenirs with local logos.

One more time about the institutional bases of Local Agenda

The documents that remain after different stages of its development and implementation can be considered as the institutional base of LA21. All these “products” of Local Agenda can be divided into following groups:

1. Law making and legal documents. At a local level, these are the following documents:
 - Decisions and legal protocols of sessions of Executive Committees.
 - Decisions and legal protocols of sessions and sittings of the Council of Deputies and also the deputy commissions and groups.
 - Orders and letters of a governing body and managerial employees of Executive Committees and Councils and also of other influential state structures.

These and other similar documents can become very useful when solving the problems of territorial development within the context of Local Agenda. Both local authorities and public structures are

interested in the official status of actions in the context of LA21. At the same time strengthening of self-governance takes place regarding duties undertaken and it makes the result better, as a rule. Besides by integration of Local Agenda or their components into the system of local regulation and legal certificates experts and deputies are more likely to examine them. That improves the quality of planning and implementation of activities.



2. Information and methodological materials. This book, in particular, is also one of them. Among these materials there are clauses, brochures, books, other printed materials,

Internet sites, video films, presentations, methodological literature, reports of research works, materials from conferences, seminars, round table discussions and recommendations from seminars and conferences including at a local level.

3. Documents of the Local Action Group. You must not underestimate these forms of documenting (institutionalisation) plans and results of Local Agenda, such as:

- Minutes of meetings of the Local Action Group
- Recommendations of seminars, round tables and conferences
- Declarations and post cards on behalf of the Local Action Group.

The use of these activities and many other forms of institutional ties for Local Agenda in combination with the creation of organisational LA21 structures (information centres, foundations of sustainable development for local communities, LA21 offices in Executive Committees) results in added dynamism and stability for the process of sustainable development at a local level.

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Agenda 21: Chapter 28

LOCAL AUTHORITIES' INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF AGENDA 21

PROGRAMME AREA

Basis for action

28.1. Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development.

Objectives

28.2. The following objectives are proposed for this programme area:

- (a) By 1996, most local authorities in each country should have undertaken a consultative process with their populations and achieved a consensus on a Local Agenda 21 for the community;

- (b) By 1993, the international community should have initiated a consultative process aimed at increasing cooperation between local authorities;
- (c) By 1994, representatives of associations of cities and other local authorities should have increased levels of cooperation and coordination with the goal of enhancing the exchange of information and experience among local authorities;
- (d) All local authorities in each country should be encouraged to implement and monitor programmes which aim at ensuring that women and youth are represented in decision-making, planning and implementation processes.

Activities

28.3. Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt a Local Agenda 21. Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. The process of consultation would increase household awareness of sustainable development issues. Local authority programmes, policies, laws and regulations to achieve Agenda 21 objectives would be assessed and modified, based on local programmes adopted. Strategies could also be used in supporting proposals for local, national, regional and international funding.

28.4. Partnerships should be fostered among relevant organs and organizations such as UNDP, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and UNEP, the World Bank, regional banks, the International Union of Local Authorities, the World Association of the Major Metropolises, Summit of Great Cities of the World, the United Towns Organization and other relevant partners, with a view to mobilizing increased international support for local authority programmes. An important goal would be to support, extend and improve existing institutions working in the field of local authority capacity-building and local environment management. For this purpose:

- (a) Habitat and other relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations system are called upon to strengthen services in collecting information on strategies of local authorities, in particular for those that need international support;
 - (b) Periodic consultations involving both international partners and developing countries could review strategies and consider how such international support could best be mobilized. Such a sectoral consultation would complement concurrent country-focused consultations, such as those taking place in consultative groups and round tables.
- 28.5. Representatives of associations of local authorities are encouraged to establish processes to increase the exchange of information, experience and mutual technical assistance among local authorities.

Means of implementation

A) Financing and cost evaluation

28.6. It is recommended that all parties reassess funding needs in this area. The Conference secretariat has estimated the average total annual cost (1993-2000) for strengthening international secretariat services for implementing the activities in this chapter to be about \$1 million on grant or concessional terms. These are indicative and order-of-magnitude estimates only and have not been reviewed by Governments.

B) Human resource development and capacity-building

28.7. This programme should facilitate the capacity-building and training activities already contained in other chapters of Agenda 21.

ANNEXURE 2.
NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS (1997):
EXTRACTS

**5.7. Regional and local sustainable
development initiatives**

“The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Belarus should be guided as much as possible by opportunities and initiatives of local state bodies and self-government and residents of the corresponding regions. It is necessary because many important problems for supporting life and safe living conditions of the population are solved at this level. Officials of local bodies are close to the population of the region. They have an opportunity to know most realistically the state of public opinion and demands of their citizens, all areas of industrial enterprise, businessmen, public communities concerning their consensus on implementation of those or other measures of the sustainable development strategy. Thus it is important to provide a wide exchange of experience, ideas and information on activities of local bodies, their cooperation with regions of the adjacent countries, partner towns, with international specialised organisations and consultation by these organisations and giving the necessary financial support.

Thus regional and local initiatives of sustainable development for Belarus should be aimed at the formation of effective regional buildings for manufacturing which also provide efficient wildlife management, protection of nature against the adverse influences on local ecosystems of industrial and economic activities of the population and enhancement of the habitat” (p. 158).

“The most expedient activities of local authorities on maintenance of sustainable development of regions in the short term should become:

- Stabilisation of the social and economic situation.
- Regulation of the demographic situation.
- Awareness of public consciousness.

- Identifying then control over ecological problems in the region.
- Appropriateness of the regulatory and legal base adjusting industrial and economic activities and order of use of local resources” (pp.158 – 159).

“Directions of a strategic nature are:

- Development and implementation of measures for rational wild-life management in the regions.
- Transformation of city and rural settlements into high grade residential areas in the context of unified town planning policy for the country.
- Making of judicial, legal, economic and other conditions to regulate development of environmentally dangerous activities in the regions.

Basic initiatives of local authorities for the stabilisation of the social and economic situation in the regions are:

- Participation in development and control over implementation of measures for structural reorganisation of the economy of the region to limit, as much as possible, the development of manufacturing and kinds of activity which worsen environmental conditions in regions.
- Primary support (simplified registration process, granting of tax breaks and other kinds of privileges, information, infrastructural assistance, etc.) at a local level to those kinds of enterprise activities which provide the greatest economic feedback, promote efficient use of resources and limit their negative influence on the environment.
- Carrying out an active policy of employment including arrangements for stimulation of job creation, for attraction of the unemployed and pensioners to agricultural and other kinds of work and also various forms of help and support to the unemployed who are wishing to start their own business” (p. 159).

“The main local initiatives for monitoring and changing demographic conditions in the regions are:

- Creation of a database of information about the population living in the corresponding territory. It makes it possible to control in real time its migratory streams.

- Assistance in finding solutions to housing problems by making land available by parcelling the land into small holdings, extension of municipal housing building volume for socially unprotected people in the population, promoting individuals building their own homes and also regulating of housing stock redistribution (exchange, sale and repayment).
- Support of socially active people in society by arranging work activity (new jobs creation, training and retraining of personnel, assistance in development of small and medium size businesses)” (pp. 159 – 160).



Goran Soster, an expert from PREPARE from Slovenia visited the Scientific Café for Sustainable Development in the Republican Scientific-Technical Library

“To focus public awareness it is necessary to achieve such initiatives as the following:

- Creation of an information system about the environmental conditions in the regions, including by use of mass media, evidence promotion at special promotions and normal information stands and periodic release of environmental newsletters.
- Assistance in promoting the environmental education of the population by encouraging activity in this area by public organisations, educational institutions and individual initiatives (lecturing, promotion and explanatory work, etc.).

Detection and control over environmental problems in the regions should be promoted by implementation of following initiatives:

- Organising tight control by local authorities over measures of environmental safety at existing environmentally dangerous manufacturers located directly in areas of an apartment blocks and at the businesses with out of date or old technical equipment.

- Inventory of manufacturers and other kinds of activity which are the main environmental pollutants in the territory and who allow emissions into the atmosphere of poison gases above the accepted maximum concentration limits or discharge untreated sewage.
- Control over observance of requirements on the mechanical condition of cars by the owners of vehicles.
- Creation, strengthening and support in regions of activity for special environmental safety services (environmental guards, departments for prevention and eradication of emergency situations, etc.)” (p. 160).

“Initiatives of local authorities to create appropriate regulatory and legal bases in the area of wildlife management should be carried out in two basic directions:

- Nationwide purpose
- Local level” (pp. 160 – 161).

“In the first instance it is necessary to make suggestions in higher echelons for development of state level laws and legal documents. Such initiatives, in priority order, are considered to be: acceptance of the law forbidding construction of enterprises who do not stipulate what is to be done with residual industrial waste; changes to the tax laws regarding transfer of tax payments for the land and natural resources in their entirety to local budgets; and legislative tightening of territorial environmental services to give them the right to check and where necessary intervene when the activity of any economic players break nature protection legislation.

Initiatives of a local level which should be implemented in the near future are: development of measures and sanctions (taxes, dues, penalties etc.) at a local level for infringements by owners of vehicles, owners of pets in city apartments and citizens who litter the environment (streets, roads, parks, residential zone).

Implementation of suggested initiatives of a short term nature in each region that will allow the creation of legal, organisational and economic bases for the solution to strategic problems of sustainable development. First of all, development of measures to achieve judi-

scious nature conservation is provided at the local level. The most significant initiatives in this direction should become:

- Arrangement of administrative control over the use of regional resources, including prohibitive measures and also selectively focused levers and stimuli.
- Development and consecutive implementation of the regional specifications to regulate the use of local resources” (p. 161).

“Such initiatives should serve as the strategic purpose for transformation of city and rural settlements to achieve the maintenance of high grade residential areas:

- Creation of regional funds for town planning development.
- Determination of construction materials allowed for the building of new enterprises taking into account their economic valuation. This provides for effective inclusion of the requirements of enterprises in all economic situations.
- Development of prospective schemes of spatial planning of corresponding areas.
- Validation of differentiated fees for use of territorial resources for town planning development.
- Development of local programmes of reconstruction and transformation of city and rural settlements in conditions of housing market grouping and structural transformations in an industrial complex.
- Determination of priority types of settlements and specific settlements to receive support for their development from municipal resources.
- Strengthening of material resources and technical equipment of municipal services, improvement of professional skills of municipal service workers.
- Allocation and arrangement near to cities and towns of special recreation areas.
- Arrangement of additional seasonal transport routes for the transport of townspeople to the country and garden-plots.
- Construction and arrangement of local roads which provide a normal transport service for the rural population” (pp. 161 – 162).

“For reasons of a strategic nature, local initiatives for the creation of the conditions regulating accommodation and development of environmentally dangerous activities will be assisted. It is possible to add to their number such initiatives as the following:

- Transfer to the local authorities with the exclusive competence such enterprises to be located in their territory.
- Creation at a regional level of a special compensation fund formed due to additional expenditure caused by potentially dangerous enterprises.
- Development taking into account local suggestions and legislative registration of economic measures for stimulating local authorities to accommodate such enterprises, etc.” (p. 162).

5.8. Territorial planning and appropriateness of settlements’ management systems

“Guaranteeing sustainable development for the Republic of Belarus and its separate regions in many aspects depends on the condition of the state administration of the development process of territorial structures. The system currently operating does not meet the requirements for effective development of territorial structures for transition to sustainable development” (p. 162).

“Institutions of settlements’ governing do not have wide powers for solving social, ecological, economic and other problems; the mechanism for a rational combination of local and republican level governance is not created. Government for decades has been adapted for requirements of a command-management system for its organisational, legal and economic mechanisms. The legislative recognition of the priority for preservation and improvement of housing during economic activities in reality was not carried out. As a consequence of this businesses were built based on industrial needs for separate branches instead of creation of a suitable for living environment. Democratic bases of decision making were broken; the opinion of the people was ignored” (p. 163).

“The basic purpose of the new policy should be the creation of a territorial development management process which provides for the

formation of a high quality environment for the population, stimulation of rational use of territory and provision of conditions for the further preservation, improvement and reconstruction of housing.

Now there are preconditions for the priority solution of challenges of development of settlements and preservation of the environment. In this connection it is expedient to have expansion of cooperation of the central and local controls with various establishments and organisations of the United Nations in the context of the main interdepartmental programmes accepted in the last years, and also of some new initiatives which have been put forward recently: UN HABITAT, Programmes of City Management, United Nations Development Programme directed to rendering assistance to the excellence of settlements' management. In 1997–2000 these programmes will extend to Belarus. In general this scheme should be focused on:

- Transfer of authority to locations.
- Wide attraction of the population for creating independent and critical solutions to local questions.
- Clear competence split on territorial levels and differentiation of powers between representative and executive bodies; strong responsibility to the population for appropriate fulfilment of the duties” (p. 163).

“Specific activity in this direction will consist of creation of a system of economic-legal maintenance of territorial management. It will regulate the development process and provide coordination of all kinds of activity taking into account the achievements of scientific and technical progress and present resources” (pp. 163 – 164).

“Priority directions for settlements' development according to the basic clauses and recommendations of HABITAT II are:

- Effective use of social and economic, scientific and technical, cultural and also town planning potential of big cities of the country, simultaneously taking active measures on preservation and improvement of habitation.
- Creation of social and economic conditions for development of the towns as being the centres for surrounding rural settlements.
- Primary development of medium size towns with a view to assisting with the problems facing big cities and small towns.

- Giving equal opportunities for development on the basis of various forms of farming in its multi-structural nature to all types of rural settlements.

It is required to specify how to transfer to sustainable development for various regions and cities and to allocate problem territories and zones for special state regulation.

The primary goals of town planning policy are:

- Overcoming of bureaucratic management and misuse of territorial resources.
- Forming of regulatory and legal bases including the development of a legislative basis of functional zoning.
- Development and implementation of a long term strategy for use of territorial resources.
- Improvement of organisational structures of management by carrying out of town planning policy and by control over its implementation” (p. 164).

“Preparation of state programmes of architecture and town planning development in 1996 – 2000, developed according to the Law of Belarus “The Basis of Architectural and Town Planning Activity in Belarus” plays an important role in territorial planning and improvement of the control system over settlements. They



Preservation of virgin landscapes is an important element of sustainability strategies. Pripyat River

are the basic form of implementation of the state town planning policy and should have great value in the further perfection of a network of cities and other settlements, for more effective use of natural, material, human and financial resources of the country, in

the complex organisation of territory and harmonious formation of a vital environment” (p. 164).

“To coordinate all practical actions at a national level concerning development of settlements of Belarus and in view of decisions and recommendations of the United Nations, HABITAT, Economic Commission for Europe we should accelerate preparation of the project of the National Concept of Development of Settlements of the Country (Decree # 266 of the Cabinet of Belarus, April 17th, 1996) whose major positions should become a basis of a National Strategy for Development of Settlements.

The basic tools for managing settlements are:

- Tools of planning such as: planning and scheduled activity; functional zoning of territory; partitioning of settlements on the sites of territory transferred in use or in property, etc.
- Tools of taxation such as: payments for territorial resources, for increase in their cost; payments for the rights to building; penalties for vacant territory; exceeding the permitted standard use of territorial resources, etc.
- Market tools such as: sale and purchase of sites (real estate), price control over sites in the territory, withdrawal of incremental costs of land (rent), etc.
- Administrative tools such as measures under the control over transfer of the communal ground areas in a private property, priorities in use of land, prohibition of construction, restriction of the rights of construction, etc.

For all cities, especially with serious problems in sustainable development, it is necessary to develop corresponding programmes directed at the solution to such problems and guaranteeing the stability of their development.

It is necessary to strengthen cooperation between cities of Belarus and the developed countries under the aegis of the non government organisations operating in this area, such as the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the World Federation of United Cities” (p. 165).

ANNEXURE 3.
NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS TO 2020¹:
EXTRACTS²

4.2.2. Transformations in development of the
agro-industrial complex

“New approaches to rural social development are planned. In strategic terms, villages are viewed not only as an agro industrial area, but also as a social and territorial subsystem which performs a wide range of economy-related functions (demographic, cultural, recreational, nature conservation, etc.).

It is necessary to approximate the living conditions in villages to those in cities by their quality. Rural inhabitants should have access to the same house improvements and health care, education, trade and service facilities as urban residents.

To keep the natural environment well conserved, it is necessary to move from the agro industrial development concept to a rural development concept. All branches and areas of production should be tightly linked to social infrastructure and natural landscape development where agrocenosis will be part of biocenosis.

The implementation of the 2004 – 2008 Programme of Rural Socio-Economic Development and Rebirth, local sustainable development strategies (Local Agendas 21) in districts, small towns and villages will play a major role in addressing these problems...” (pp. 36–37).

¹ The National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus through to 2020. Minsk, 2004. Read more about NSSD 2020 on www.fpb-belarus.org

² Editor’s note: Page numbers in this edition refer to the English translated version of the document were possible however this is an abbreviated document so where a translation of the original text has been needed the page numbers refer to the Russian edition and are marked RE.

4.3.7. Development of disadvantaged areas. Mitigation of consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant accident

“The relevant investment and innovation activities can be intensified through the creation of regional agencies, councils, and foundations, exercising an integrated and well balanced approach to the regional development”... (p. 47).

5.6. Regional sustainable development programmes

“A transition of the Republic of Belarus to sustainable development in large measure depends on the active involvement of country regions in this process. In discharging their specific functions, local and regional authorities should contribute in their own way to sustainable development and improvement of the life quality of their residents. They are responsible for social development and governance on the territories under their control based on sustainable development principles. Thus, local administration plays a pivotal role in synthesizing all opinions and translating them into specific targets and programmes, including into local sustainable develop-

ment strategies (Local Agenda 21)” (p. 55).



Session at the First Republican Scientific-Practical Conference: “Sustainable Development of Territories. Local Agenda 21 in Belarus”, Minsk, 2007

“The purpose of these programmes is to substantiate the transition of the Minsk City and Regions to sustainable development based on effective involvement and inputs of the regions in the entire implementation process. Region specific NSSD-planning in Belarus should be made within

the framework of existing state forecasting and socio-economic development programmes (as separate short-term, mid-term and long-term forecast) as well as in the form of individual programme documents aimed at addressing the full gamut of social, economic and environmental problems or individual, most urgent developments in a specific area”... (p. 55).

“Regional programmes of sustainable development of regions and Minsk city should be developed in view of regional geographical, social and economic, environmental, demographic and other features. For their development first of all it is necessary to consider:

- Local interests and problems of sustainable development.
- Available resources and necessity of their protection for regeneration (ground, wood and water, minerals, protection of atmosphere, preservation of biodiversity, etc.).
- Social and economic aspects (demographic situation, protection and strengthening of health, struggle against poverty, change of consumption and manufacture structures, struggle against criminality).
- Necessity of assistance to reach sustainable development for the settlements.
- Priority of national programmes for sustainable development (food, housing, demographic, etc.).

According to this, in each region specific measures directed at the formation of management structures along principles of sustainable development should be defined. Among such measures first of all it is necessary to implement those which provide:

- The best regional economic structure in view of local ecosystems.
- Development of branch offices and activities on the basis of available natural resources with use of the progressive technologies adapted for local conditions guaranteeing preservation of the environment.
- Implementation of measures for granting to the population social services at a level of established social standards, on guaranteeing the environmental safety of inhabitants of regions.

- Creation of comfortable conditions for the population residing in city and rural settlements.

When determining the parameters of economic growth and social development in programmes in view of possible restrictions for creation in specific land for optimum structure of economy the ecological situation, permissible load on environment and a degree of utilization of economic capacity of territory should be considered.

In conditions of uncertainty from the expected influences of external and internal factors on social and economic processes, it is necessary to develop regional programmes with various scenarios. Basic distinctions between them should consist of the degree of intensity of use of internal and external economic growth factors at transition to sustainable development and also in intensity and efficiency of implemented economic reforms” (p. 156 RE).

“Development of various scenarios for the region’s development allows consideration of possible situations in which the economic and social sphere of regions can be ascertained during the predicted period. A scenario approach should be based on a corresponding economic hypothesis and have not just quantitative, but qualitative differences considering both internal, and external factors of social and economic development of region” (pp. 156 – 157 RE).

“Issues addressed in each region should to a large extent match the national sustainable development objectives. Therefore, socio-economic development goals and objectives should be formulated from region to region in due consideration of the national regional economic policy priorities of Belarus. A priority task is to enhance the integration of socio-economic development of the regions considering their specialisation in the national division of labour and increase efficiency of inter-regional and foreign economic relations”. (p. 55 – 56)

“In complex programmes it is necessary to assess resource opportunities of regions, to reveal ways and means of activating this potential for solving the major social and economic problems and their development.

For the development of regional programmes it is necessary to provide: target orientation of actions for the achievement of definite fixed results; interlinking measures and activities; interlinked and coordinated use of levers of influence on economic processes (acts, investments, grants, tax and credit privileges, tariff policy, etc.” (p. 157 RE).

“Programmes should define ways and means of economic policy in the interest of sustainable development (economic security and institutional transformations, fiscal, monetary and crediting, price regulation, etc.)” (p. 56).

“In order to achieve the objectives and targets of regional sustainable socio-economic development and to implement regional programmes, it is necessary to provide for a set of interlinked measures and activities, economic mechanisms that would help address key issues, ensure concerted action of all stakeholders (including business and public organisations) involved in the implementation of each specific programme” (p. 56).

6.1.2. Spatial planning and governance improvement in regions and communities

“Achievement of positive results on sustainable development of urban and rural settlements demands strengthening the institute of local self-government, expansion of its rights, financial opportunities and responsibility, maintenance of greater independence and sufficiency of powers in making and implementation of administrative decisions” (p. 166 RE).

“Regional policy implementation includes legal, economic and financial tools aimed at ensuring regional sustainable development – development and implementation of Local Agenda 21, subsidies, loans provided by national government bodies to the problem regions in order to create additional opportunities for economic growth, support favourable environmental status and involve local people in this process” (p.60).

6.2.1. Advancement of democracy and civil society. Empowerment of NGOs, working class, trade unions, business and science for promotion of sustainable development

“Consolidation of democratic principles in the life of the country and the formation of a civil society based on this foundation are the major factors of sustainable development of Belarus, of political and social stability.

Civil society (CS) is a set of organisations, associations of citizens, rules of law, valuable philosophies and ideas and concepts that help by incorporation of group and private interests of society members with bodies of the government. These structures are the non government, religious organisations, trade unions, political parties, public initiatives and various informal groups on interests. Today in Belarus there are more than 3000 CS organisations” (p. 170 RE).

“The national adoption of the sustainable development model requires mature civil society, market economy, the rule of law, and the commitment of state, society and business to joint efforts based on the principles of transparency, partnership and ownership” (p. 61).

“One of the primary goals for NSSD 2020 is to create conditions allowing every individual, social group and organisation to participate in the governmental decision making, receive all information about the results of implemented decisions, assess their impact on the civil society structures and socio-political institutions. At the same time, it is necessary to maximize the involvement of non government organisations (NGOs), working class, trade unions, business and science during implementation of the sustainable development strategy” (p. 60).

“Enhancement of the role of NGOs as public partners of governmental organisations requires continuation of the development of official procedures and instruments, which would ensure real involvement of NGOs at all the levels of NSSD implementation: starting from policy development and decision making until actual

implementation based on the principle of shared responsibility” (pp. 61 – 62).

6.2.3. Regional and local sustainable development initiatives

“The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, September 2002) reaffirms the resolve of the world community to continue promotion and strengthening of sustainable development councils at both national and local level, and to empower local authorities and other stakeholders to implement the Agenda 21.

Creation of economic, social and ecological groundwork for sustainable development of the country is impossible without the involvement of local communities called for to look for ways and means to ensure sustainable development in specific areas, urban and rural communities. There are only four local sustainable development initiatives in Belarus (Local Agenda 21): projects in Turow, Minsk, Vileika and Dzerzhinsk.

A number of non government organisations, civil initiatives and projects have mounted educational and awareness rising campaigns into Local Agenda 21 planning and implementation. They include NGO “Ecodom”, Belarusian Subsidiary of the NGO “International Academy of Ecology”, Foundation of the Implementation of Ideas, UNDP Project “Development and Internalization of National Sustainable Development Strategy within the Context of the Republic of Belarus” (p. 183 RE).

“In view of the above, one of the primary objectives of the National Sustainable Development Strategy of Belarus for the period to 2020 is to create organisational, legal, financial and other stimulants of regional and local initiatives aimed at establishing economic, social and ecological frameworks for sustainable development of regional and local communities of Belarus, searching actively for internal resources to address related tasks and ensuring effective support of these initiatives at a national and international level” (pp. 183 – 184).

“To achieve these objectives at different stages of NSSD 2020, several important tasks will need to be resolved to ensure the improvement of the existing state administration and local self-government system and further democratize the entire Belarusian society.

The purpose of regional and local initiatives is to meet social and economic needs of people in respective areas while conserving and improving the environment and other living conditions.

Local Agenda 21 initiatives and other similar activities should originate with local authorities, non government organisations, economic entities, associations of house owners, individuals, who will independently define a range of problems, tools and timeframe of implementation taking into account local needs, socio-economic, natural, ecological and other specifics and modalities largely influencing sustainable development status in given areas and regions” (p. 65).

“For definition of a route, scales and terms of implementation of local initiatives on problems of sustainable development it is provided to guarantee:

- Development of territorial economic systems in view of a complex estimation of social, economic, environmental protection and other aspects of their functioning.
- Expansion of areas, kinds and volumes of economic activities on the basis of use of local natural resources with simultaneous introduction of environmentally safe technologies.
- Guaranteeing the needs and employment of local population by priority development of manufacturing and kinds of activity guaranteeing natural ecosystems’ preservation.
- Designing and accommodation of new manufacturing in view of the current level of development of territories and development of infrastructure and the necessity of preservation of existing natural landscape advantages and features” (p. 184 RE).

“Regional and local initiatives which in the predicted period will be considered as priority directions for state support are suggestions and programmes aimed at:

- Stabilization of a social and economic situation in regional and local communities.
- Maintenance of rational nature management and conservation.
- Improvement of a demographic situation in regional and local communities; support of the institute of the family.
- Improvement of quality of life and consequent reduction of number of poor people.
- Preservation of historical monuments and culture, development of tourism.
- Creation of new and (or) preservation of existing workplaces, development of small and medium size businesses in administrative and territorial units.
- Perfection of a local social, environmental, transport, informational-communicational and energy infrastructure.
- Providing access to the population to local ground resources.
- Perfection of management by municipal services, development of housing construction, territorial planning in administrative and territorial units.
- Development of local systems of public health services, education and social security” (pp. 184 – 185 RE).

“Specific methods of implementing tasks should be defined by local authoritative and public structures independently. As the basis of such actions the following is recommended:

For local controls:

- Immediate and direct control over introduction of process, principles and requirements of maintenance of sustainability of development of regions and updating of existing measures in this area.
- Inclusion of principles of sustainability in projects, plans and other kinds of activity undertaken within the limits of existing authoritative powers of management by economic activities for territorial formation.

For public organisations:

- Implementation of the actions directed at increasing the consciousness and educational level of the population.

- Consultation of the public and its involvement in the process of implementation of principles of sustainability.
- Strengthening of partnership attitudes with authority and business, allowing influencing a situation in the region in social, economic and ecological areas.
- Development of strategic and tactical actions for the purposes of local sustainability.
- Active participation in monitoring, management and general estimation of a situation and progress in achievement of sustainability of the region's development” (p. 185 RE).

“The national government bodies of Belarus are to strengthen and improve cooperation with international organisations on a continuous basis – UNDP, HABITAT, UNEP, World Bank, EBRD, etc., as well as with the European Union and those governments that have attained recent spectacular successes in state support of regional and local initiatives, in particular, in the conduct of Local Agenda



Nicola Swan (IRN) and Menno Houtstra (ECEAT Project) at the First Republican Scientific-Practical Conference: “Sustainable Development of Territories. Local Agenda 21 in Belarus”, Minsk, 2007

21 campaigns (Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, Denmark, etc.)” (p. 65).

“For effective coordination of regional and local initiatives local authorities should have wider organisational, legal and financial autonomy. They also need much closer communication with the international organisations promoting the international

cooperation of regional and local authorities, an exchange of the best practices of management of municipal facilities, preservation of the environment – the International Union of Local Authorities

(IULA), the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), etc.” (pp. 185 – 186 RE).

“In this connection already at the first stage of NSSD 2020 implementation (up to 2010) in Belarus it is necessary to carry out updating of regional policy of the state, decentralization of the government and also to continue reforming the operating system of local government and self-government” (p. 186 RE).

“Carrying out the national mission, regional authorities and local governments should take into fullest account the specific features of their territories and capitalize on the opportunities and conditions available to their specific region, town and community. A matter of prime importance is to create solid economic groundwork to improve living conditions of the population living on a specific territory” (p. 66).

“Considering the novelty and scale of the sustainable development strategy, the necessity for reorganisation of mass consciousness with a view to recognition of the vital importance of the new conceptual approach to problems of development of a society, for its implementation it is planned to create conditions of involving the population widely in this process with the use of democratic procedures of discussion of basic directions and planned actions contained in it.

At regional and local levels it is necessary to create mechanisms of stimulation of initiative activity of the population, various social groups and the associations, aimed on maintenance of sustainable development in a specific region, district, city or village. Local authorities and self-government in close contact with republican state bodies should develop offers, programmes of state support of regional and local initiatives by means of tax-budgetary, financial-credit and other tools. They should implement a state policy in this sphere, and also coordination of initiative activity of the population, various social groups and associations directly in administrative and territorial units, in local areas, courtyards, schools and separate houses” (p. 186 RE).

“The most important tools of administrative, economic and financial regulation of social and economic development of regions are the following:

- A suite of measures directed at the increase of financial independence of local authorities, expansion of their opportunities for development and maintenance of social places, rendering of social help to the population in conditions of homelessness and realisation of social policy on a local level.
- Rendering additional state support to problem regions to create opportunities for local authorities to execute their functions to the full in these territories.
- Development of a suite of programmes of social and economic development of regions, Local Agenda 21. These programmes allow local controls to plan effectively and to complete the most prospective tasks for the increase of economic potential of territories and the improvement of social and ecological conditions of people’s life.
- Strengthening of ecological control over local controls and increase of their interest in maintenance of favourable environmental conditions by means of transfer to a local level of a part of the collected “environmental” taxes and penalties.
- Assistance to creation of a Commission on Sustainable Development at local self-governmental institutions of all levels.
- Maintenance of preparation, mass duplicating and wide circulation of methodical recommendations on development and implementations of Local Agenda 21 for local control and self-government, non government organisations and various groups of the population, putting them on web-sites of corresponding republican state bodies and also demonstration and pilot projects at the level of administrative and territorial units of different levels.
- Involving of local population widely in the solution of current problems at the level of enterprises, organisations, housing and municipal services; increase the ecological culture of the population” (pp. 186 – 187 RE).

“At all stages of NSSD 2020 implementation it is necessary to provide monitoring of the process for promotion and implementation

of regional and local initiatives with regular estimations of the practice of support from the state bodies and the publication of these results in periodic reports.

These and other measures will allow implementing initiatives of local authorities for the creation of favourable living conditions for the population in subordinated territory” (p. 187 RE).

**ANNEXURE 4.
THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME “AGENDA 21” FOR
“NADEZHDA” (1999). EXTRACTS**

“The purpose of this programme is the continuation of work on understanding and training of employees of the enterprise in environmentally correct ways to live. The programme of actions “Agenda 21” for “Nadezhda” assumes a definition of the basic directions of work in “Nadezhda” now and in the future).



Week on Ecology in the Children’s Centre “Nadezhda”

“The basic directions of the programme of actions “Agenda 21” for “Nadezhda” are:

- Energy saving (electricity, heat, fuel)
- Sources of water and water savings
- Sorting and recycling of waste
- Land improvement (a suite of activities aimed at increasing the fertility of the ground)
- Nature management
- Environmental education
- Development of a programme on obtaining and using local food stuff”.

**The description of achievements of Children’s Health
Centre “Nadezhda” in Environmental protection**

Energy saving

Power supply

...“In what ways have we achieved economies?”

Explanatory work with employees of the centre, the personnel working and serving electric equipment for efficient use of energy has been carried out. “Switch off when unattended” and “Save electricity and water” information placed at stands and on the specific current consumption of the equipment were good presentations. All this finally has given positive results. Actions to save electricity were developed. A strict control over charge of the electricity to consumers with monthly and annual analysis and informing of heads of divisions has been established.

Replacement of lighting by more economic versions is regularly done. Replacement of filament lamps in a dining hall with high light efficient fluorescent lamps exemplifies it: it has allowed us to lower the current consumption by about 17 kilowatt-hours to 1.7 kilowatt-hours. Installation of sensor switches in general areas also promoted saving of electricity. On a number of items programmable devices are installed, allowing them to be turned off at set times (ventilation in dormitories, illumination of the grounds, etc.).

For further savings of electricity the construction of a wind farm is planned. This opportunity is being studied now.

All these factors allowed saving 134840 kilowatt-hours of electricity in 1999”.

Actions for saving of heat and fuel

“The following was done:

- The efficiency of cast iron boilers “Fakel” was raised.
- Intake bodywork is replaced with bodywork of foreign manufacture (spherical cranes, special valves and other devices) with the purpose of saving hot water through it.
- Thermal insulation of the third dormitory by a 10 cm thick material “Isover” will allow saving of approximately 20000 litres of boiler fuel for a season.

In the long term it is planned to thermally insulate dormitories #1 and #2 and the whole school.

When constructing new buildings it is planned to use solar energy for the hot water supply and a thermal regulation system by installation of solar panels on the roofs of buildings.

...

In areas with the highest water consumption waters meters are partially installed. Next year this work is planned to be completed.

Heating System

... “Individual thermostatic systems are installed in buildings at the centre. They improve heat control in each building and allow a comfortable heat to be maintained around the clock, to lower temperature when there are no people in a building and to raise it when it is necessary (adjustment: day / night).

All boilers and pipelines from the boiler house are sheathed by a heat insulating material for energy saving. This gives a significant economy of fuel, electricity and water.

Buildings at the centre which have no individual thermostat systems are supplied by batteries which have thermostatic valves. These valves allow the temperature to be adjusted on every battery individually according to the need for heating each room. The personnel of the boiler-house are trained for work in a boiler house and on heating systems as a whole to achieve the best economy of power resources under the accreditation of the institute “Belenergosbe-rezhenie”.

...Depending on the ambient temperature there is an adjustment for the temperature of water on the input of the heating main and its output.”

Sorting and recycling of waste

... “It is suggested that we should sort and recycle the waste with the purpose of reduction of the quantity of waste at “Nadezhda”. Thus, we shall make a contribution to energy saving, natural resources and preservation of our environment.

The analysis of the type and quantity of waste at “Nadezhda”, shows that waste can be divided into following groups:

- Paper
- Organic waste
- Other waste.

Places for their further use are defined accordingly:

- Waste paper is collected at the recycling centre in Vileika
- Organic waste is used for compost in specially allocated places.

For sorting of waste the participants of the project are provided with the following stock and equipment:

- A wooden container marked “Paper” with compartments for paper and cardboard.
- Two plastic containers marked “Organic waste” are installed in specially allocated place for waste collection.
- Three big metal containers marked “Other waste”.



Possibilities for recycling

- Plastic rectangular buckets for collecting paper for recycling in offices.
- Mini-containers for organic waste with a capacity of 10 litres in the apartments of the employees living on the grounds of “Nadezhda”.

Conservation

We fully realise the urgency of the conservation problem. Stations for biological clearing and a sewage treatment station were built in the centre for protection against pollution of ground waters by commercial activities.

Station for biological clearing

The station for biological clearing (SBC) is based on the use of fundamental functions of organisms which oxidise the organic substances contained in sewage in colloidal form or clear liquids. Biological clearing is carried out in artificially created conditions, in a bioreactor. For the solution to this problem in 1999 the station of biological sewage treatment was put into operation. By construction of the station we used highly effective technology of sewage treatment applied in many countries of the world.

High reliability, low power consumption and software for controlling the system allow maintaining of this station effectively, practically without attendants.

SBC consists off:

- An intake module of sewage
- A filter for the solid particles
- A bioreactor
- An air compressor for aeration in the bioreactor
- A mechanical device for aeration
- A compartment for gathering active silt
- Filtration screens.

The sewage incoming during work activities goes into the intake module of the sewer pump station located in the grounds of the centre. Further, by pumps on two pressure head collectors, sewage goes into the SBC intake module; once reaching a certain programmed level sewage is pumped into the filter for mechanical clearing where the separation of solid particles from the liquid takes place; solid particles go into a special plastic package for their further recycling”.

ANNEXURE 5.

LOCAL AGENDA 21 FOR TUROW TOWN

As approved by the initiative group of Turow residents
on October 25th, 2000.

Introduction

Making an Agenda 21 for Turow is the first attempt at development of this type of programme in our country. The background to this process is as follows. In June, 1999 the public organisation “ECOLINE” addressed the Zhitkovichi District Executive Committee with the suggestion of participating in an international Belarusian-Swedish project on development of Local Agenda 21 for a settlement in Belarus. Turow was chosen as the pilot project. This project was carried out with the support of SIDA (the Swedish International Development Agency).

A working meeting with a prospective initiative group took place in October of the same year. This group was comprised of the interested residents of the area.

A tentative estimate of the most important questions for sustainable development of Turow and its neighbourhood was made. During meetings and consultations with “ECOLINE” the basic problems and interests of all Turow residents were determined.

The initiative group of inhabitants in Turow continues their activity on the formation, completion and implementation of the ideas proclaimed in the document which you hold in your hands. This plan of action is the first step in a continuous process of creating a Local Agenda 21 for our native town.

We hope that during work on the Agenda many items in the presented document will be added to and advanced and that already in the near future residents and visitors to Turow will see concrete results of the activity of the initiative group towards implementation of these plans.

The initiative group invites all Turow residents and also all interested citizens to participate in the work of subgroups in following areas:

- Economy
- Cultural heritage
- Health protection
- Ecology
- Social problems.

We wait for you in our information centre which is located in the Town Council building.

We would like to thank all those who took part in the development and drawing up of the Turow Local Agenda 21. We hope that your cooperation will continue.

We are grateful to all of you who, having read through this document, will find an opportunity to give us their thoughts concerning the organisation of the practical activities to implement the Agenda items.

Initiative group

Introduction

Sustainable development is treated as development in which the satisfaction of needs of the current generation of people does not create a threat to future generations. The main principle of sustainable development is to make decisions based on the triple issues of environmental, social and economic problems. One of the components necessary for transition to a sustainable future is development and implementation not only of global and nationwide programmes of sustainable development, but also so-called Local Agenda for the 21st century (Local Agenda 21). Creation of the Local Agenda 21 for Turow is the first attempt at development of this level of programme in Belarus.

Working out a strategy for sustainable development for Turow allows the town community to independently define the goals of town development in the long term and to provide real participation to wide sections of the population in decision making and government

of town life. Only by operating with joint efforts and constantly improving our vision of the future for our native town, can we carry out the necessary changes in our life.

The most important things directly infringing the interests of all Turow residents currently are the following:

- Preservation of biodiversity
- Waste
- Power supply
- Supply by food stuffs
- Quality of water
- Public health services
- Construction, building maintenance and housing
- The organisation of traffic and transport
- Ecological education and environmental information
- Restoration of a cultural heritage
- Social problems and unemployment.

Preservation of a biodiversity



Sustainable design

Turow is at the centre of the Pripyatski National park. The fauna of the National park totals 45 kinds of mammals, 265 types of bird, 7 types of reptiles, 11 types of amphibians and 37 types of fish. In the National park there are bison, badger, lynx, black storks, grey cranes, snake eagles, eagle

owls, spotted eagles, marsh turtles, cane toads, smooth snakes and sterlet¹. The flora is represented by 826 kinds of higher plants and more than 200 kinds of mosses. Special interest is represented with flood plains where in conditions of constant flooding fresh waters

¹ Editor's note: A type of sturgeon

generates the original vegetative complexes presented by unique oak groves and ash forests, replaced in a lower reaches by black alder forest and willow forest, among which the surprising flood lakes teeming with fish are located. In the heart of Turow there is a unique flood meadow which is the nesting place for many kinds of birds.

To preserve biodiversity in the near future it is planned to carry out the following actions:

- To initiate development and acceptance by local authorities and nature protection bodies of a comprehensive plan of wildlife management for Turow and its vicinities.
- Preservation in Turow of the flood meadow, being a unique place in Europe for these types of nesting birds.
- To achieve from the persons making the decision on use of the grounds an obligatory account of features of unique natural landscapes of Turow and environs.

Waste

“... A huge part of Turow’s territory is littered by evidence of civilization: glass, packaging, film polyethylene from poly tunnels, jars, plastic, bottles, etc. The polyethylene film from poly tunnels, waste from branch offices, jars and glass are thrown out behind the Dvoreckaja farm on a meadow where children usually run barefoot and for years people have grazed cows. At Peredolya, Strumen and Kuřa quay it is the same: film, broken bottles, jars. Some people have blocked the storm water drain here. It is dangerous to let our children run about barefoot. Even in our own courtyards and nearby there is dust, fire wood, manure as free advertising of the owner’s carelessness, “decorating” our life.

By spring the high waters fill Pripyat² and all around and the fruits of our activity are carried by the water. Somewhere it gets snagged on a branch and it decays after the high water goes down. Everything, that can decay, decays in valleys, lakes and small rivers.

² Editor’s note: A river that runs near the Chernobyl nuclear power plant at the South of Belarus.

The fish eat it, animals drink the poisoned water and people eat the poisoned fish and meat and drink milk from the animals! We do it, we see it and we continue doing it.

The concepts seems to be: nature is mine and I do what I want with it!?

We leave a bad inheritance for our children and grandchildren. And the worst thing is – we teach them bad things too.

Old people remember that Turow was clean before the war...

The problem of household waste in Turow is very topical. Unfortunately, in Belarus for the present there is not the opportunity to collect household waste separately for recycling which is an accepted operation in many European countries. It creates certain difficulties as it is necessary to make decisions which are economically expedient and at the same time less painful for the environment. In this connection the following actions are planned for the near future:

- To increase the number of places for collecting solid household waste by installation of additional bins in Turow.
- To organise street cleaning by yard keepers in the morning.
- To organise a campaign for construction of a recycling and waste depot in Turow. The choice of a place to build this and the civil engineering design should be approved by population of Turow during public hearings about conforming to environmental safety requirements.
- To organise a campaign of training for the Turow population about the best situation with regards to waste by release of leaflets and publications in the local newspaper.
- To organise a campaign on rational use of bio-decomposed waste suitable for composting.
- To consider in the long term an opportunity of use of domestic waste as an initial raw material for making fertilisers and biogas.

Power supply

Transition to use of non-conventional, renewable energy sources is one of the opportunities to lower not only environment damage but also to affect positively social and economic aspects of town life. Therefore the priorities currently are the following:

To organise building cheap solar thermal collectors based on the experience in Belarus and Sweden (with the prospect of using local materials) and their subsequent installation in the grounds of the museum and the musical school.

To study opportunities for a wind turbine installation near Turow.

Supply of food stuffs

Adequate supply with food and food safety is one of the key components of the health of the population. Also it is necessary to solve the problem of excessive packaging of food which now almost completely goes to waste sites. In this connection residents of Turow are going to:

- Support the increase in supply of shops with food from local and regional producers.
- Supervise the quality of the goods in grocery stores.
- Organise the collection of reusable containers.

Quality of water

A big problem in Turow is to supply good quality drinking water to the people. The high content of iron in ground and underground water is typical in this district and it negatively influences the quality of water and worsens its taste. Besides in the private sector where there is no water drain, domestic drains are rarely cleared. It is especially dangerous when polluted water gets to the river Pripyat.

The construction of a water purification and de-ironing station is almost finished now. In the future it is planned to carry out the following actions:

To create additional capacity for water purification.

To organise water removal properly in the private sector involving owners of the land areas.

To promote among townfolk (especially in the private sector) simple methods of clearing domestic sewage in order to decrease the pollution of Pripyat River.

Public health services

The growth of Turow's population, improvement of its residents' health, decrease in death rate and increase in life expectancy are the basic aims for the stabilisation and improvement of the demographic situation. In this context it is planned to carry out the following actions in the near future:

- To promote building of a rehabilitation centre in the vicinity of the town hospital.
- To hold a public forum about population health problems to identify the list of priority issues for Turow to development as a healthy town.
- To familiarise people with the principles of creating and developing healthy cities according to the Healthy Cities project of the World Health Organisation and to find opportunities for the application of these principles to Turow.

Construction, Building Maintenance and housing

In connection with the necessity for building maintenance in Turow according to principles of sustainable development, town dwellers should be provided not only with sound and good quality housing but also as much as possible by environmentally clean housing. Building of any other type should correspond to the same princi-

ples. In this connection in the near future it is planned to carry out the following activities:

1. To develop a project for the district with individual buildings based on the available information in Belarus of building individual energy efficient eco houses from natural recycled materials, and also projects for eco houses with zero power consumption made from natural recycled materials and using permaculture principles.
2. To petition the local authorities for construction of 120 single houses on Kirylla Turovsky's Street, a hotel and a multi-storey complex in the area of Solnechnaya Street.
3. To restore the art gallery.
4. To promote eco-friendly materials and methods of rebuilding houses among local residents.
5. To keep an eye on construction and rebuilding of the buildings listed below, mentioned in the "Plan for Turow Development":
 - A kindergarten with 240 places on Solnechnaya Street
 - Gas supply network for natural gas
 - An electricity grid
 - A laundry
 - Water supply systems
 - Musical school
 - Reconstruction of schools # 1, #2 and the town cultural centre
 - Reconstruction of telephone lines and also the infrastructure in Turow and its environs including:
 - Construction of a bypass
 - Building maintenance in Kirylla Turovsky street
 - Greening of Turow and organisation of a plant nursery
 - Rearrangement of Strumen quay
 - Rearrangement of Peredol quay.

Organisation of traffic and transport

Inadequate transport from Turow should be addressed to provide an opportunity to commute with the nearby and distant settlements

in the shortest time. With this in mind it is planned to carry out the following activities in the near future:

- To organise a permanent bus route Turow – Zhitkovichi with 3 – 4 hours travel time.
- To equip the bus station and the grounds around it with modern amenities.

Ecological education and environmental information

Ecological understanding not only of children, but also of adults is one of the key barriers to competent participation of townsfolk in town management on the basis of principles of sustainable development. To increase public knowledge about the state of the environment and its protection it is planned to carry out the following activities in the near future:

- Open classroom on “Ecology and preservation of the environment” at schools.
- Release and distribution of a leaflet informing people of the activity of the Turow Local Agenda 21 information centre.
- Assistance to employees of Pripyatski National park by forming an exhibition at the Museum of nature.
- Distribution of information concerning the solution to domestic waste problems, advantages of alternative power, etc. through activities of the Turow Local Agenda 21 information centre.
- Organisation of an ecological library for Turow residents in the premises of the Turow Local Agenda 21 information centre.

Restoration of cultural heritage

Turow was mentioned for the first time in the “Tale of Bygone Years”. It dates back to 980. It is the most ancient town in the region of dryhavichi. From the end of the 10th century it was the political, economic and cultural-religious centre of the principedom Turow. The first prince mentioned in the annals was Tur and the town was named after him. The family of the Rurik dynasty reigned in Turow after 988.

Fragments of ancient fortification have been found intact. Excavations found ruins of a temple from the 12th century. Burial places in sarcophagi were found in the temple. Also found there were the remains of wooden residential buildings and household outbuildings of log construction with pise-walled and brick furnaces, the remains of glass bracelets, a windowpane, bones, arrow tips and spears, knives, tinderboxes, metal locks, bracelets, rings, temporal rings, unique lead sacred images, chess figures and glassware.

Turow had trading communications with Kiev, the northern Black Sea Coast, the Near East, Asia Minor, Volhynia and Baltic countries. Tailors, potters, iron-workers, jewellers, bone carvers and woodworkers worked in the town. Ancient Turow was one of the major religious and cultural



centres of Kievan Russia. Kiryla Turovsky³, a well known figure of Old Russian culture also lived and worked here.

In the 2nd half of the 12th century the Turow principedom entered a stage of feudal dissociation, and Turow lost its former political value. At the end of the 12th to the beginning of the 14th century it was notable for the developed craft industry and trade. Since the 1320s it was a part of the Grand Duchy of Litva. In 1502 and 1521 Turow was attacked by Tatars. In the 16th century a castle was built on Zamkovaya hill. The town consisted of the main part and two suburbs. In 1649 Turow was burnt down by Janush Radzivil armies. It was devastated in the Russian-Polish war in 1654 – 1667. In 1648

³ Editor's note: Kiryla Turovsky or Cyril of Turaū (1130–1182) was an Orthodox Christian bishop and saint in the Orthodox Church. He was one of the first and finest Belarusian theologians.

there were 401 houses in town, and in 1667 only 111. In 1790, there were a total of 497 houses in Turow. From 1793 Turow was a part of Russia, a Volost centre of the Mozyr County.

In 1865 the Turow gospel was found. It was one of the earliest monuments of Eastern Slavonic writings of the 11th century. Ten rolls were kept.

Unfortunately, architectural monuments of Turow's history have not been kept safe until now. Nowadays there are only walls of buildings from the beginning of the 12th century – Turow church, made of plinfa⁴. They are from 0.3 – 0.5 m to 2 m high. The basic fortification of the castle, the Tower of Turow, was taken down in 1730s. The Gostinyi dvor⁵ of Turow existed at the end of the 18th to the 19th centuries. It has not been preserved either.

The Turow museum of local lore, history and economy has five exhibition halls. Materials from archaeological excavations, ethnographic exhibits and documents of Turow history are presented on exhibit at the museum.

Turow is now famous not only for its ancient history but also for its folklore heritage. The Turow national dance ensemble Pripyat and the Turow national chorus are known not only in Belarus, but also abroad.

In order not to lose the richest cultural heritage of Turow, one of the most ancient cities of Belarus, and to enhance it, it is necessary to do the following:

- To renew archaeological excavations on Zamkovaja hill
- To organise a secure open-air museum
- To restore the destroyed Turow church of the 12th century
- To construct in miniature the Turow plan on the island
- To organise a museum of ancient history and crafts near the old buildings
- To organise a museum above the base of a cathedral on Zamkovaja hill.

⁴ Editor's note: Thin red clay bricks.

⁵ Editor's note: Literally translated as 'guest court' or 'merchant yard' it means an indoor market area or shopping centre.

Social problems and unemployment

Sustainable development is impossible without finding solutions to the social problems and increasing the level and quality of life for all categories of people. For this purpose it is necessary to provide to the residents of the town an opportunity for getting a well paid job, to expand the participation of the public in local decision making and to remove the worst social problems. For this purpose it is planned:

1. To promote industrial sites in Turow of branches of the Gomel bricks and paving slab manufacturing business.
2. To consider opportunities for organising tourist routes based on Turow and the Pripyatski National park, combining the principles of ecotourism and a historical and cultural approach.
3. To promote attracting manufacturers of solar panels from interested Swedish firms to Turow by means of our Swedish partners.
4. To promote development of the town's infrastructure in order to solve the problem of what people do with their leisure time.

ANNEXURE 6.
PROPOSALS FOR THE LOCAL AGENDA 21 PROJECT
FOR THE LOCAL AREA ZAPAD IN MINSK.
EXTRACTS

Advisory document as the forerunner to the United Nations Declaration on Sustainable Development and the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020.

...

Priority issues for actions

1. Involving the local population in the decision making process and development of partnerships with different groups from society

The condition of the environment is all city dwellers' responsibility without exception. There is an area of responsibility for authorities and business; however the result of efforts to improve the environment appreciably depends on the level of interaction and mutual understanding between all the participants in the process.

Tasks:

- To create reliable and effective partnerships between the administration of the Frunzenskij district and public organisations, schools, industrial enterprises, local businessmen and the interested public to promote sustainable development of the area and the implementation of Local Agenda 21.
- To initiate the creation of public self-government at every housing and communal service in the local area through committees.
- To identify public interest and to consider it in decision making on buildings and changes to the local area infrastructure during the analysis of influence of industrial targets on an environment.

2. Power and climate change

Energy efficiency is a priority of state policy and, according to predictions from experts, Belarus has the potential for energy efficiency increases of up to 40 - 50 %. At issue in this area are both the task of power safety and the opportunity of a solution to many environmental and social problems. There is a direct dependence between efficient use of energy and reduction of financial charges for people. Therefore the attitude to the use of energy should change the level of consciousness of people.

Tasks:

- To actively inform all groups of people in the local area for the necessity to save energy to prevent climate change.
- To promote demonstration projects on the use of alternate energy sources and how to use less power in houses.
- To actively replace out of date heating systems in the local area to reduce power losses.
- To organise training programmes for drivers on economical driving.
- To put automatic switches on external electric lighting for roads, sidewalks and other public places which switch off depending on the degree of natural light.
- To notify the public by mass-media about changes of tariffs by energy carriers; to inform the public about the use of charges for water (hot and cold) and gas and to encourage installation of hot and cold water meters in houses and apartments.

3. Transport and air pollution

The air quality today is under threat owing to the constant increase in the amount of personal motor transport. Thus, problems for people in the form of noise pollution and dangerous emissions for pedestrians and traffic jams are also created. Inhabitants can improve the situation by changing to public transport and taking a sensible attitude to it.

Tasks:

- To lower air pollution from exhaust fumes from cars through improvement of the traffic system at intersections in the local area, improvement of the quality of road surfaces and traffic control.
- To provide higher safety of traffic by improving the traffic control systems (e.g. traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, etc.).
- To improve the condition of asphalt covering of roads and pavements in courtyards of housing estates in the local area and to optimise the system and sizes of car parks.
- To provide in the plans of the local area for building multi-storey parking for a park and ride system.
- To create in the local area cycle paths (for example, in the area of green belt “Medvezhino”) and to make road markings (1m from a roadside) for cycle paths; to improve footpaths.
- To improve how public transport works by improving the regularity of transport (not creating over-crowding at peak travel times) and to increase the comfort levels.
- To optimise the system of existing routes of public transport and to start new routes, for example, trolleybus lines Sucharevo to Zapad to Zhdanovichi market and Sucharevo to Zapad to the Minsk Refrigerator Factory.
- To equip the public transport stops “Polyclinic”, “Yakubovsky’s street” and Zapad-3” with canopies and benches.

4. Waste and resources

Burial of waste in landfill and its incineration lead to total environmental contamination and creates a threat to peoples’ health. The considerable reduction in level of these risks is possible by reduction of the amount of waste and by increasing the amount of recycling and reuse.

Tasks:

- To provide and organise separate collection of solid domestic waste and also training of the population in methods of separate waste collection.

- To increase the number of rubbish bins and rubbish trucks in the local area, to optimize their location and to provide proper sanitary conditions.
- To arrange scrapping and recycling of old cars that are dumped in the local area.
- To monitor the banning orders on fly tipping in the local area and to make infringers responsible, whether ordinary inhabitants or businesses or other establishments.
- To stop fly tipping of industrial and household waste on the platform of the building in the grounds of the forest park “Medvezhino” on Lobanka Street near the prayer house.

5. Green plantations, green zones and the environment

The number of garden areas and the maintenance of existing green zones of the local area “Zapad” are insufficient for the present time. In this sense the green belt “Medvezhino” has an exclusive value. But it obviously requires the attention and care of all the population of “Zapad” and from responsible authorities and bodies.

Tasks:

- To increase the size of green zones in the local area and to prevent the building on existing green zones by structures for any purpose.
- To raise the level of understanding by the local community about the maintenance problems of gardens and the necessary public participation in this process.
- To expand the network of modern children’s playgrounds in the local area and not to allow ferro-concrete or naked metal designs for their construction in favour of wood and plastic; to improve the quality of existing playgrounds and to monitor their continued condition.
- To identify accessible and convenient places to walk dogs; to carry out information and awareness campaigns on the necessity for owners to keep their pets under control.
- To increase the responsibility of dog owners for infringement of rules by their pets and to constantly monitor the situation, including using the powers of authorised people.

- To put recreation equipment around the natural lake in the grounds of the housing estate “Krasnyj Bor”.
- To upkeep and beautify the square at the crossing of Burdejny’s street and Yakubovsky’s street (to create a project for inclusion of a children’s playground on the square and to provide the opportunity for public consultation with residents of the local area).
- To upkeep and beautify the forest park “Medvezhino” (including foot and cycle paths, benches, summerhouses and pavilions for rest and meetings of amateur chess players and to install lights) and to keep it in a good condition for present and future generations.
- To transfer the green zone “Medvezhino” and adjoining large forests to one organisational body (it is preferable to Zelenstroj) and to give them ‘park’ status for more efficient control and use for recreational purposes;
- To create an environmental track in “Medvezhino”, to hang out bird boxes for starlings and other artificial nests for birds of different kinds (it would be good to do this in housing estates of the local area) and to enclose all ant hills with a fence.
- To create in the local area a water system similar to the ones in the local areas “Zelenyj Lug”, “Wostok” and “Chizhovka”, etc.

6. Water, air, health

The good health of the citizens is the basis of a viability society. The state of health of residents of “Zapad” depends on many factors and substantially on the quality of air which we breathe and the quality of the water which we drink.

Tasks:

- With the inclusion of public organisations to increase awareness in society of health issues and to accelerate work on education, spreading information and the additional education of children and adults how to live a healthy lifestyle.
- To reduce the level of air pollution and the noise level made by motor transport, industrial enterprises and from other sources.

- To improve the quality of water in the water supply systems of the local area both at the stage of its collection and by improvement of the condition of the water pipe network into apartments.
- To arrange the prompt transition to underground sources of water supply for the local area.
- To define the list of the diseases typical for residents of the local area, to lead a detailed analysis of the reasons for the bad state of health of people and to develop solutions to the corresponding problems.
- In due course to catch stray dogs and other homeless animals who represent potential sanitary and epidemiologic danger.
- To build in the local area public baths, and prior to this to take prompt measures for restoration of the bath in the village Kuntsevshchina which was previously used by many inhabitants of the local area.
- To reduce the turnover of staff in district clinics (in particular among therapists and doctors of particular specialities) and provide basic staffing.
- To restore pools to working order in multi-clinics.
- To finish construction of the rehabilitation centre on Yakubovsky street.

7. Physical culture and leisure

Physical and sporting exercise and well organised rest and recreation of citizens are a precondition of maintaining working capacity and activity of all layers of a society.

Tasks:

- To construct an open air scenic platform in the local area.
- To build a cinema; a high standard public pool with a sauna in the local area.
- To increase the number of sports centres, exercise rooms, athletic fields and hobby groups accessible to children and adults in the local area; to promote them actively among the population.

- To put in the “Medvezhino” park footpaths (and cycle tracks) about 3 km long ‘terrainkur’¹ with marks every 500 m.
- To speed up work on the organisation of leisure for children and adults and carrying out of large cultural and sports events in the local area; to organise a traditional annual holiday for the local area attracting residents to help in its preparation.
- To develop and install in housing estates special permanent all-weather table tennis tables (or to provide an opportunity for their seasonal reinstallation).
- To stimulate the creation of open spaces for leisure pursuits for the youth; to open a youth café in the local area.
- To expand the field of opportunities for participation of youth in socially useful activities and to involve the youngsters.
- To open an interesting and accessible public cultural centre for all groups of the population of the local area.

8. Social policy concerning elderly people

The care of elderly people is, first of all, a mark of respect by the youth and capable citizens to the senior generation of the country. But its economic aspect has also an important value. Finally, an effective model of assistance to elderly people is economically profitable for a society and the state.

Tasks:

- To organise meal stations with reasonable prices for elderly people with a low income in the local area “Zapad”.
- To create a day club (a daytime hospital) for lonely people and for people who are elderly or infirm, who live in solitude; to give to this category of residents of the local area a coupon system for ‘visiting’ doctors in the district clinic by phone.
- To provide construction in the local area of a hostel for small families, lonely people, for people who live alone and for married couples of advanced age; to place in its ground floor household services for common use and a medical post.

¹ From the German meaning a treatment method designed on prescribed walking.

- To build a medical-social centre for citizens who are infirm including an apartment house, a social centre, a geriatric multi-clinic with a permanent presence for bedridden patients.

9. Infrastructural conditions of life and law order

The architectural decisions used for building in the local area, the condition of residencies and municipal infrastructure noticeably influence the feelings of people. Beautiful houses and pleasant courtyards, well arranged lawns and clean entrances are a credit to the good psychological state of health of residents, a source of pride and love for the city and the local area.

Tasks:

- To raise understanding by the local community of its responsibility for the appearance of the local area, for cleanliness and order in its streets, in courtyards and on public transport.
- To equip steps on footpaths and approaches to entrances of apartment houses with handrails; to level pavements where there are big puddles after rain.
- To improve the culture of repair works and building in the local area.
- To improve the appearance of houses in residential blocks by using architects and modern ideas and colour.
- To equip places on pavements that meet pedestrian crossings with flat slopes (ramps) for the convenient of people in wheelchairs.
- To accelerate spreading the word to the public about an individual's share of the responsibility to carry out running repairs of entrances and their maintenance in a good safe condition.
- To rouse the public to think about using uniform glassing of loggias in apartment blocks.
- To equip each large supermarket in the local area with toilet facilities accessible to shoppers.
- To help residents and get them involved in public gardens both at the planning stage and decision making stage as well as implementation and establishing domestic gardens.
- To install an additional number of payphones in the local area.

- To conduct a vigilant watch on antisocial behaviour such as drinking alcohol in public places and in courtyards.
- To forbid the trade of spirits in 24 hour shops in residential areas and to prevent the sale of spirits and cigarettes to minors.
- To struggle actively against drug trafficking among the youth, in particular in places of entertainment (for example, in the disco “Velkom”).

10. Creation of new workplaces, development of trade and services

Presence of work and a constant source of income is one of the main requirements of life and the main precondition for creation of acceptable living conditions for people. However, the increase in employment should be a harmonious process and the increase in manufacturing should occur as a result of the introduction of new ecologically safe technologies.

Tasks:

- To promote development of trading enterprises, public catering, other services and leisure in the local area.
- To open a high quality and accessible cafe (fast food cafe), working until 11 p.m. in the local area.
- To construct a department store for industrial goods on the grounds of housing estate “Zapad 3”.
- To synchronize active building of the housing estate “Krasnyj Bor” with maintenance and the provision of the necessary amount of infrastructure: kindergartens, schools, savings banks and shops.
- To increase the number of mini-markets where residents can bring surplus stocks from their agricultural production which have been grown in rural areas and on personal plots in parts of the local area.
- To create the right conditions for the development of ecological business on principles of clean manufacture.
- To maintain an appropriate level of child support establishments enabling parents to work or search for work.

- To create favourable conditions for the employment of youth and part time employment for youths still studying.

11. Increasing the level of knowledge and understanding in the field of sustainable development

To make environmentally competent decisions it is necessary to increase the level of knowledge concerning sustainable development among those who live, study or work in the local area “Zapad”.

Tasks:

- To increase the level of knowledge about sustainable development amongst the people and promotion the achievements of each person, family and local area in this process.
- To increase the level of knowledge about sustainable development by the people involved in decision making through their participation in special educational programmes.
- To inform the public about plans and projects to build any structure for any purpose in the local area and its probable influence on the environment.
- To get youth to be involved in the tasks of sustainable development of the local community.

The next steps of the initiative

The present suggestions, not being the final edition of the project of Strategy of Sustainable Development, obviously, require further discussion and completion by all interested parties. During the forthcoming work they can bring about the foundations of a concrete plan of action approved by local authorities, and thus, it can become **Local Agenda 21 for the local area “Zapad”**.



Leaders pave new ways

ANNEXURE 7.
DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY FOR KOMAROVO VILLAGE.
A SWOT ANALYSIS (2006)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geographical position • Well developed transport infrastructure (roads of local value) • Presence of an educational institution • A dynamic leader • Rich architectural (a manor and park complex), historical and cultural heritage • Interest in national traditions (revival of holidays) • Natural potential (national park, unique landscapes, a hydrological network of international value) • A lot of youth and able bodied population • Support of the majority of the local population • Use of local power resources for heating • A developed information-consulting infrastructure (mobile connection, the Internet, www.komarovo.com) • Support by village Council • Presence of craftsmen • A big number of intellectuals and people with higher education • Presence of working business-models (a bakery, cafe, etc.) • A business centre • Public organisation “Women for revival of Naroch area” • Brand “Komarovo” (Naroch Lake area) • Many empty buildings and readiness of authorities to transfer them for use as local structures • Conditions for a high quality of life for youth are created • Partner relations and international communications • Experience in preparation of applications, receiving of grants, implementation of projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remoteness from economically developed centres, Minsk • Insufficiently active use of local energy sources • Low levels of income of the population • Restraint of the population about their own problems, passivity • Demographic situation (falling of birth rate, high death rate) • No new building of houses for 10 years • Komarovo is not an administrative centre • Bad transport communication with cities and towns • Migration (departure) of youth • Drunkenness • Cultural separation • Bad quality of drinking water • Presence of an unprofitable production-agricultural cooperative • Primitive treatment works • Absence of a system of waste • Passivity of regional authorities, absence of support • Lack of employment • A border zone order

Annexure 7

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting the status of an agricultural enterprise (for construction of houses) by the agricultural school • Increase in tourist appeal • Development of infrastructure • To restore the narrow-gauge railway (as a tourist attraction) • Search for partner contacts (Baltic, Poland) • Expansion of communications in the third sector • Use of renewable energy sources • Mobile phone (MTS) • Creation of advertising brands, trade marks • Creation of a model of sustainable development for the local community • Duplication of best practices • Development of ecologically clean agriculture within the limits of a tourist zone • Development of crafts and national crafts • Creation of a system for the treatment of waste, systems of water treatment, drains • Development of roadside service (cafe, parking, motel) • Development of internet technologies and of attendant businesses • Development of fish breeding and horse breeding • Integration of school and vocational education • Integration of sustainable development principles in educational programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing of the kindergarten, school and agricultural college • Extinction of villages • The Ignalina atomic power station • Construction of a burial ground for nuclear waste in Lithuania • Administrative pressure • Departure of the leader • Instability of the legislation • Rise in energy prices

GLOSSARY

Agenda 21 is a document passed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 by representatives of 179 countries.

Agenda 21 is the basic international agreement on problems of balanced and complex approach to questions of the environment and development. Sustainable development is the central idea of Agenda 21. It is the foundation for Local Agenda 21 which is the local version of Agenda 21

Alternative and renewable energy sources are things like water power of small rivers, wind power, solar and geothermal energy, low grade heat of external air, ground, underground and superficial waters.

Biological diversity (biodiversity) is the variety of forms of life, various plants, animals and micro-organisms, their genes and ecosystems formed by them. It is usually examined at three levels: the genetic variety, the variety of species and the variety of ecosystems.

Civil society is a set of relations in the area of economy and social life, developed within the limits of a democratic society independently from the state. The civil society is realised in the form of a set of non government institutions and self-organising (initiative) groups capable of organising and responsible for collective actions for the protection of socially significant interests within the limits of previously established rules of civil or legal character. An interpretation of the term “CS” is also contained in the “National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus to 2020”.

Concept (*Latin* conceptio - system, set, sum)

1. System of views, this or that understanding of the phenomena of the reality;
2. The unified, defining plan, leading idea of any scientific or art work.

Condominium is a legal relation between proprietors of an integrated complex of real estate (the ground area and the real estate located on it), in which separate parts (flats) are in private, state or other ownership, and other parts (the common property) are in the common shared ownership.

Cultural variety is a variety of cultural models, of a way of life and their separate social and economic, ethnographic and historical elements, traditions and other features of the life of the population of a country as a whole and its separate groups.

Delegation of powers is transferring a part of the rights and duties in decision making and in realisation of these actions or others and also the responsibility for the actions, to a subordinate or other person or organisation by the head or authority.

Ecological crisis is negative, frequently difficult to reverse, changes of the biosphere in a number of regions of the globe, which lead to sharp deterioration of people's inhabitancy, first of all in cities¹.

Ecological footprint is an indicator for estimation of sustainable development of mankind, estimating the "load" of a man on nature. It is calculated, as a rule, in the form of the ground area and the water resources necessary for manufacture of resources and processing of waste for vital activity of the amount of people.

Ecology (*Greek* oikos - dwelling + logos - science) is a science about the organisation, functioning and mutual relation among themselves of over-organism systems of various levels: populations, kinds, biocenosis (communities), ecosystems, biogeocenosis and biosphere. The modern ecology intensively studies the interaction of a person and the biosphere.

Economy (*Greek* oikos - economy + homes - a rule) is developing within the limits of a socio-historical formation on the basis of the developed productive forces and relations of production strategy and tactics of economic activities covering all parts of commodity

¹ Editor's note: This is widely contested as many developing countries and rural areas are now thought to be likely to be the first and worst hit areas; however this is a direct interpretation of the author's views from a Belarusian perspective.

production, distribution, circulation and consumption of material benefits.

Energy efficiency is characteristic of actions which have been carried out by the manufacturer or the consumer of power products as a result of which expenses of energy per unit of released production are reduced, not having an adverse effect at the level of delivering services.

Forecast (*Greek* prognosis - prevision) is an estimation of the future tendency by research and analysis of accessible information; probabilistic judgment about some phenomenon.

Green movement is an ecological, social and political movement opposing the injurious attitude to natural resources. The main goals of this movement are wildlife conservancy and preservation of the environment.

Human capital is opportunities of people caused by their abilities, upbringing and education.

Indicator is a characteristic of the investigated object, available for supervision and measurement, which allows judging its other characteristics inaccessible to direct research.

Institutionalisation is a legal and organisational fastening of social relations.

Investments; capital investments (*Latin* investire - to invest/to give ownership) is a long term capital investment in the enterprises of different branches, business projects, social, economic and ecological programmes or projects.

Lobbying is an intentional establishment of relations with an official or an employee of any executive department on behalf of another party and the subsequent pressure upon him / her with the intention of influencing the making of favourable official decisions.

Local Agenda 21 is a process in which local authorities work in close cooperation with all sectors and layers of a local society, creating and developing plans of action for the achievement of sustainable development at a local level. The idea of Local Agenda was offered as a tool for achievement of sustainable development at the United

Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Local Agenda 21 is widespread in many countries of the world and it is an effective tool for the sustainable development of local communities.

Local community is a territorial collective, the population constantly living on local territory, united by common interests and perceiving itself as a unit. An important (but not obligatory) characteristic of a local community is the self-organising of citizens in the place of their residence, presence of a common authority and/or self-management and also legislated borders and the administrative status of territory.

Local fuel resources are the resources made and used within the limits of a local or national economic complex: peat, wood, inflammable waste from farming, specially cultivated vegetable fuel (bio fuels).

Local is concentrated in one place, inherent in one place.

Local self-government is the legislated activity of the population for the solution to questions of local value, based on the interests of the population, its historical and other local traditions, directly or through institutions of local government.

Local territory

1. Territory within the limits of a municipal formation, limited in view of historically developed relations and/or having natural borders – a courtyard, street, local area, settlement;
2. Territory of compact residing of homogeneous population (community). Territory of compact residing the homogeneous population (community).

Mass media are the means of distribution of information, characterised by addressing to a mass audience, general availability, corporate character of production and distribution of information. Mass media are:

- Press, radio, TV
- Cinema, sound recordings and video recordings
- Videotext, tele-text and billboards

- Home video centres combining television, telephone, computer and other communication lines.

Monitoring is an activity which includes periodic supervision of elements of a controllable object, made according to a certain schedule, with the purpose of revealing their characteristics (a current condition and trends).

Natural resources are natural objects which can have ecological, economic, recreational, educational or aesthetic value.

Non government organisation (NGO); public organisation is a non-commercial organisation created without participation of the state, not pursuing political or religious purposes, whose basic field of activity is a socially useful activity. An NGO consists of people sharing common interests, ideologies, cultural predilections outside formal state bodies.

Organic farming is systems of agriculture in which artificial mineral fertilizers are not used.

Partnership is a system of equal rights in mutual relations of the organisations and persons for the achievement of a common goal. Interaction and coordination of participants within the limits of partnership, integration of efforts and resources allow increasing their efficiency and getting a synergistic effect.

Pilot project is a project during which new approaches, techniques and technologies are approved and their completion and specification take place. In case of the success of the pilot project it is, as a rule, offered for distribution and duplicated. The pilot project (sometimes the definition 'experimental' is used) is as a rule, carried out on a limited scale, on the basis of a small amount of objects which often are named pilot objects.

Plan is the work planned for a certain period and its purposes, matter, volume, methods, sequence, executors, terms of implementation and indicators of evaluation are given.

Principle is a leading idea, a key rule of behaviour.

Project is a composite of actions which are carried out for the achievement of any purpose. The project, as a rule, has common

management, certain resources, target dates and a plan for implementation.

Region (*Latin* regio - area) is a region, a district, a territory, a part of the country, region, district, which is notable for its set of developed social and economic, ecological, geographical and other characteristics. In international terminology it is the territory, which unites some countries (for example, region of the Baltic Sea).

Strategy (*Greek* strategía = stratos – an army + ago – lead) is the most general plan of actions based on far-reaching forecasts; a choice of key directions of the development, integrating central goals, policy and actions in the coordinated unit.

Sustainable development is “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This definition, used by the United Nations, is now the most widely applied. At the same time there are a large number of other interpretations of this concept. So, according to the definition of the World Bank, sustainable development is the management of the cumulative capital of a society in the interests of preservation and augmentation of human opportunities. Sustainable development definitions are often based on fixing of the necessity of harmonious development of manufacture (economy), the person (social sphere) and the surrounding environment. In a number of definitions the accent is made on not exceeding the maximum permissible levels of anthropogenic influence on ecosystems.

SWOT analysis is a method of analysis, which, as a rule, is realised in the form of group work. Abbreviation SWOT is used because of the origin of the four English words: strength, weakness, opportunities and threats. These characteristics of an analyzed object or phenomenon are fixed and estimated during the SWOT analysis.

Synergistic effect is a characteristic of the result in a situation when, working together, separate elements have more influence, than the sum of the separate influences of each of them.

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www.curs.kz	Centre for Sustainable Development for Astana (Kazakhstan)
www.detnaturligasteget.se www.naturalstep.org	The Natural Step
www.disna.nm.ru	Disna County
www.ecoproject.org	Public organisation "Ecoproject Partnership" (Belarus)
www.environment.sa.gov.au	Sustainable development in Australia
www.fpb-belarus.org	Programme of Support of Belarus by the German Federal Government.
www.iclei.org	Local Governments for Sustainability is an international association of local governments and national and regional local government organisations that have made a commitment to sustainable development.
www.iisd.org	International Institute for Sustainable Development (Canada)
www.international-rural-network.org	International Rural Network
www.iscv.org	The Institute for Sustainable Communities (the USA)
www.johannesburgsummit.org	The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg, 2002
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www.un.org/russian/conferen/wssd/agenda21	Agenda 21. Official edition
www.uwe.ac.uk/spectra	EU-project SPECTRA. Under the framework of this project were developed principles of sustainable development for territorial development and spatial planning
www.wbcds.ch	World Business Council for Sustainable Development

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