



ЦЭНТР ЕЎРАПЕЙСКАЙ ТРАНСФАРМАЦЫИ
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Interaction potential of environmental organizations in the solution of common tasks

The report is based on the research findings

Center for European Transformation



Study commissioned by the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”

Authors:

Andrei Yahorau

Aksana Shelest

Karyna Shyla

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Center for European Transformation

Minsk, Belarus

cet@eurobelarus.info

cet.eurobelarus.info

+375 29 6185388



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Introduction

Belarusan environmental organizations (the “green”, environmentalists) occupy a significant place in the structure of Belarus’ public sector. It is expressed both in the total number of the existing organizations¹ and in the noticeability of their actions against the general background of public organizations’ activity. Recently (2010-2013) there have been about 30 joint actions and campaigns organized by environmentalists, which have been actively covered by the mass media and which have resulted in a certain public resonance (See Table 1)².

Table 1. Joint actions and campaigns of environmental organizations

Type of joint action	Number
Awareness-raising campaigns	8
Actions to protect flora and/or fauna	7
Campaigns against the construction of environmentally hazardous objects	1
Anti-nuclear actions	11
Actions against infill housing (insertion of additional housing units into an already existing neighborhood)	2
In total	29

At the same time, the efficiency of the majority of the initiatives aimed at cardinally changing a situation in the sphere of the condition and preservation of the environment leaves much to be desired. There are only singular examples when environmental organizations have managed to succeed while trying to counteract infringements of citizens’ rights to have the favorable environment. The “green” have initiated and achieved success even to a lesser degree in their actions aimed at changing the framework conditions and general policy in the environment protection field. The reasons of such a state of affairs are the external adverse conditions for civil society’s activity in the country and the objective condition of the environmental sector development. Also, an importance role is played here by the internal factors of the character and level of cooperation between environmental organizations, as well as between environmentalists and their immediate surroundings. The affinity of purposes, the similar understanding of the situation, and the coordinated perception of themselves and others on the general field of joint activity definitely have a significant impact on environmental organizations’ cooperation which, in its turn, influences the efficiency of the solution of common tasks, too. Actually, this inner aspect (i.e. perceptions of cooperation) is the subject of our further consideration. On the basis of the analysis of the similarity/distinction of perceptions of cooperation, the **potential of cooperation** of environmental organizations and their surroundings in the solution of common tasks will be evaluated.

¹ As of 01 January 2013, in Belarus, there are 30 international and national public environmental associations with the state registration (See: **International and national public environmental associations** (in Russian) [Electronic resource] // Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus. — The official website of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus. — Access date: 22 Oct 2013. — Access mode: <http://minjust.by/dfiles/eco.doc>, free. — Title Screen). In addition to them, according to our calculations, in Belarus, there are not less than ten more environmental initiatives and organizations that have no Belarusan state registration.

² Also, see **Annex 1**.

It is necessary to underline that within the pale of this research we focus our attention on the **perceptions** (conceptualization; understanding) of **mutual cooperation** of participants of joint actions and initiatives. We consider **joint environmental actions and initiatives** to be initiatives which are organized and/or carried out in cooperation of representatives of the environmental movement among themselves and/or with other subjects of civil society, state structures, and international structures in order to achieve environmentally significant purposes. The initial assumptions of the research group were based on the idea that the solidarity potential of subjects of interaction depends on their affinity or alterity when it comes to:

- 1) **evaluation of previous cooperation (or retrospections of cooperation);**
- 2) **missions, purposes, and tasks of cooperation;**
- 3) **factors that influence cooperation development;**
- 4) **concrete steps to develop cooperation;**
- 5) **evaluation of prospects and expected results (outcomes) of cooperation.**

Accordingly, it is believed that the subjects of interaction who are close to each other as for these parameters will have a higher potential of their joint actions. This circumstance can be called “vertical consentaneity” or the concurrence of evaluations of different subjects of interaction; however, it is also necessary to take into account “horizontal consentaneity” or the concurrence of evaluations of one subject at various levels (national — organizational — personal). Thus, if there are considerable divergences or contradictions between probable purposes of cooperation at the national level and the purposes which are pursued in cooperation by a separate organization or the leader of an organization, it influences negatively the overall potential of cooperation.

Our research conclusions are drawn on the basis of the analysis of perceptions of three groups of respondents:

1. Leaders of environmental organizations;
2. Representatives of organizations with whom environmentalists build their interaction (immediate surroundings);
3. Activists of environmental organizations.

Our research was conducted in **May-July 2013**. In order to collect the necessary research data, we have organized:

- **24 individual interviews** with leaders of environmental organizations (in the capital and regions), as well as representatives of organizations from environmentalists’ immediate surroundings (other public organization of Belarus and international organizations);
- **2 focused group interviews** with environmental activists from various environmental public organizations (the average duration of a focus group is 2 hours; the total number of participants is 13 people; 3 of them are from regions);
- **Monitoring** of mentions of environmentalists’ joint actions in the mass media during the period from the beginning of 2010 to the first half of 2013.

Thus, we have managed to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the perceptions of cooperation, which is seen differently by Minsk-based environmental organizations and organizations from regions, leaders and ordinary activists, the “green” and their colleagues from the public sector.

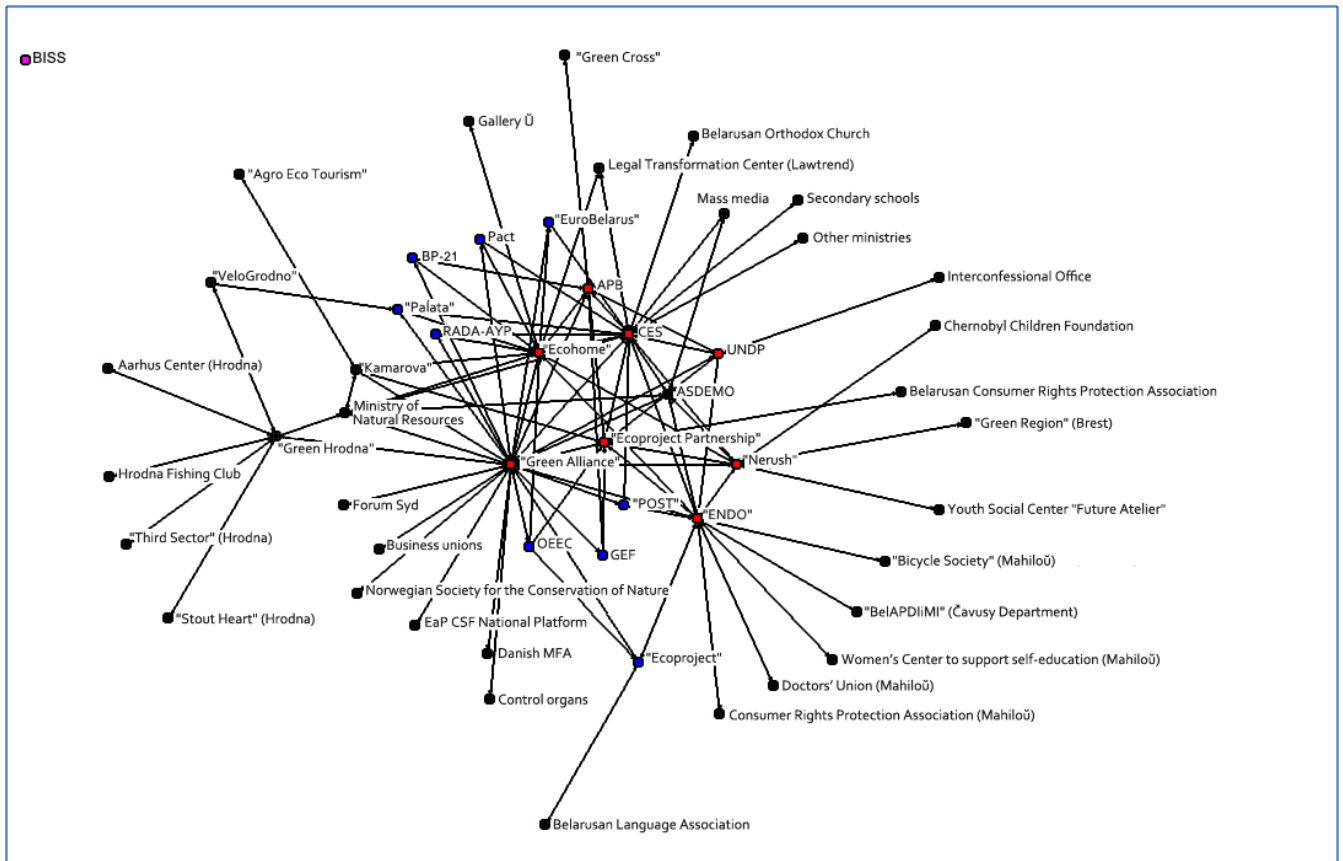
In the first part of this document, we outline an overall picture of network interaction of environmentalists and their surroundings and in the next parts we analyze substantial aspects of their cooperation.



1. General description of network interactions of environmentalists and their immediate surroundings

During our research, the participants of the interviews were offered to answer a question concerning contacts of their organizations during the last year. On the basis of these answers, it is possible to draw a scheme of network interactions of environmental organizations. Of course, this network does not reflect an absolutely complete and objective picture of interactions; in many respects, it is a subjective point of view of the participants of our research. Nevertheless, it reflects rather important, in their opinion, connections. Moreover, this network allows us to see the area of common interaction and to include peripheral contacts which are significant for some (more often — regional) organizations. It is possible to present the mutual contacts of environmental organizations and organizations from their immediate surroundings with the help of the following diagram (See Diagram 1).

Diagram 1. Network interactions of environmental organizations and their immediate surroundings*



* Data is analyzed with the help of UCINET 6 software.

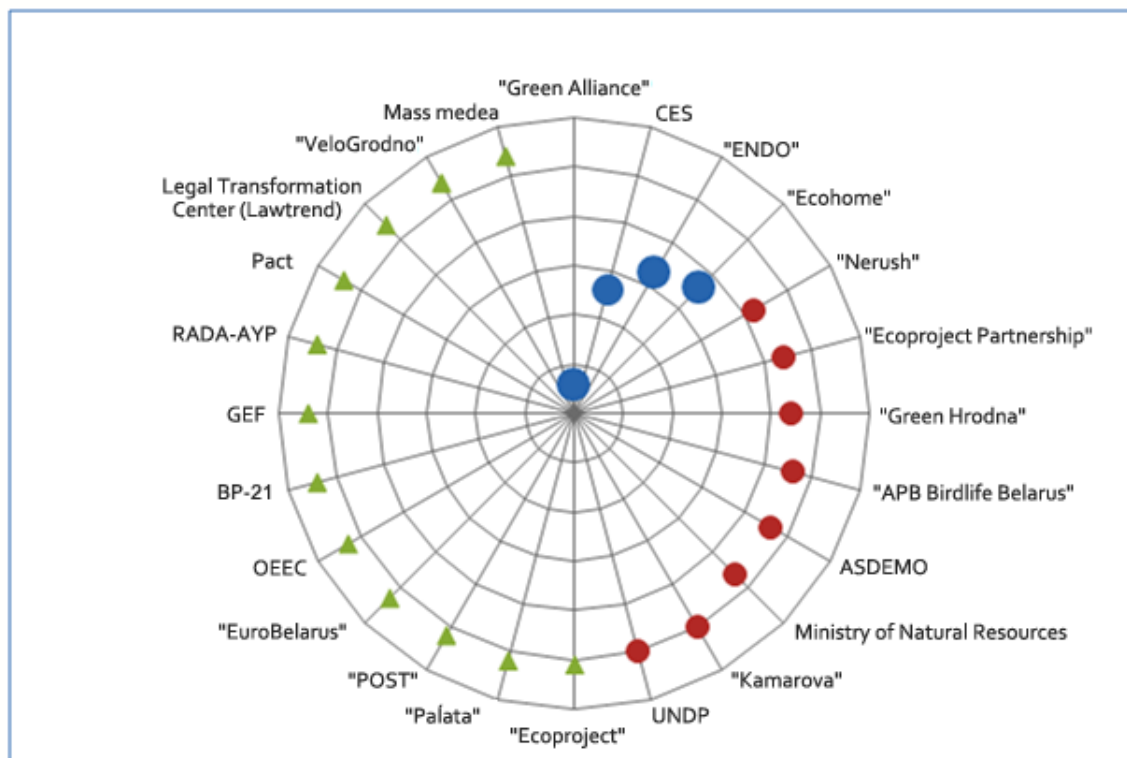
The participants of our research have mentioned 52 structures which are covered by the network of interactions. There are 3 groups of organizations in it:

1. **Central knots** of the network — the biggest number of contacts (Diagram 1 — red points): Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”, Centre for Environmental Solutions (CES), Public Association “Ecohome”, NGO “APB Birdlife Belarus” (APB), Mahiloŭ City Public Environmental Information Association “ENDO”, International Public Association “Ecoproject Partnership”, Environmental and Regional Studies NGO “Nerush” (Baranavičy, Brest Region), United Nations Development Program in the Republic of Belarus (UNDP);
2. **Middle knots** (Diagram 1 — black, blue, and gray points): Environmental Informational Center of the City of Hrodna and the Hrodna Region “Green Hrodna”, Regional Public Association “Homiel Association Children and Youth” (ASDEMO), Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry of the Republic of Belarus (Ministry of Natural Resources), Public Association “Women for the revival of the Narač Region”/Center of Rural Entrepreneurship Development “Kamarova” (Miadziel’ District, Minsk Region), International Public Association “Ecoproject”, Civic Initiative “Pałata” (Połack, Viciebsk Region), Public Association “Education Center “POST”, International Consortium “EuroBelarus”, Office for European Expertise and Communication (OEEC), Voluntary Public Project “Biełaviežskaja Pušča” [Byelavyezhszkaya Forest] — the 21st Century” (BP-21), Global Environmental Foundation (GEF), National Council of Youth and Children’s Organisations of Civil Society of Belarus “RADA”/Web portal “Alternative Youth Platform” (RADA-AYP), International NGO “Pact”, Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), Civic Initiative “VeloGrodno”, the mass media as a whole;
3. **Peripheral contacts** — the organizations with only one connection (Diagram 1 — green points).

The Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) has not been mentioned by any of the participants of our research although it has been included in the list by the customer of this research. A representative of the BISS has marked that the organization does not cooperate with environmentalists, if not to take into account their participation in the work of the Belarusian National Platform of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership.

Displaying the same relations a little bit differently, it is possible to construct a sui generis “planetary model” of the most important relations (except the peripheral ones). Here, the organizations which are closer to the center of the “galaxy” have a wider network of contacts and cooperate more (See Diagram 2).

Diagram 2. “Planetary model” of contacts*



* Calculations are based on the total amount of contacts of organizations.

Here, the unconditional leaders are the “Green Alliance” and the environmental organizations CES, “ENDO”, and “Ecohome”. A special position of the “Green Alliance” is explained, first of all, by its special purpose, i.e. to be a linking element for the environmental community of Belarus, and, if we consider the results of our research, it corresponds in many respects to the reality of the existing relations. An important place is also occupied by regional organizations such as “ENDO” from Mahiloŭ, “Nerush” from Baranavičy, and “Green Hrodna”, which means there is some potential to develop the cooperation of the “green” at the regional level³.

It is necessary to separately designate **types of interacting organizations and structures**. For research purposes, we (1) consider the “green” network structures, organizations of the “green” community from the capital and regional ones, as well as (2) we consider the surroundings of the “green”:

³ In some cases, regional “green” organizations are more likely informal initiatives based on the authority and activity of the leader of an organization, while the structure of activists is changeable. Therefore, it is not quite correct to compare them and “green” public organizations, as well as them and network structures of the “green”. Nonetheless, as we do not analyze the organizational development of the “green” during our research, we will not differentiate between initiatives, leaders’ structures, and public organizations.

1. The “green”:

- a) Network structures: “Green Alliance”;
- b) Minsk-based organizations: CES, APB, “Ecohome”, “Ecoproject”, “Ecoproject Partnership”;
- c) Regional organizations: “Green Hrodna”, “Nerush”, ASDEMO, “Pałata”, BP-21, “ENDO”, “VeloGrodno”.

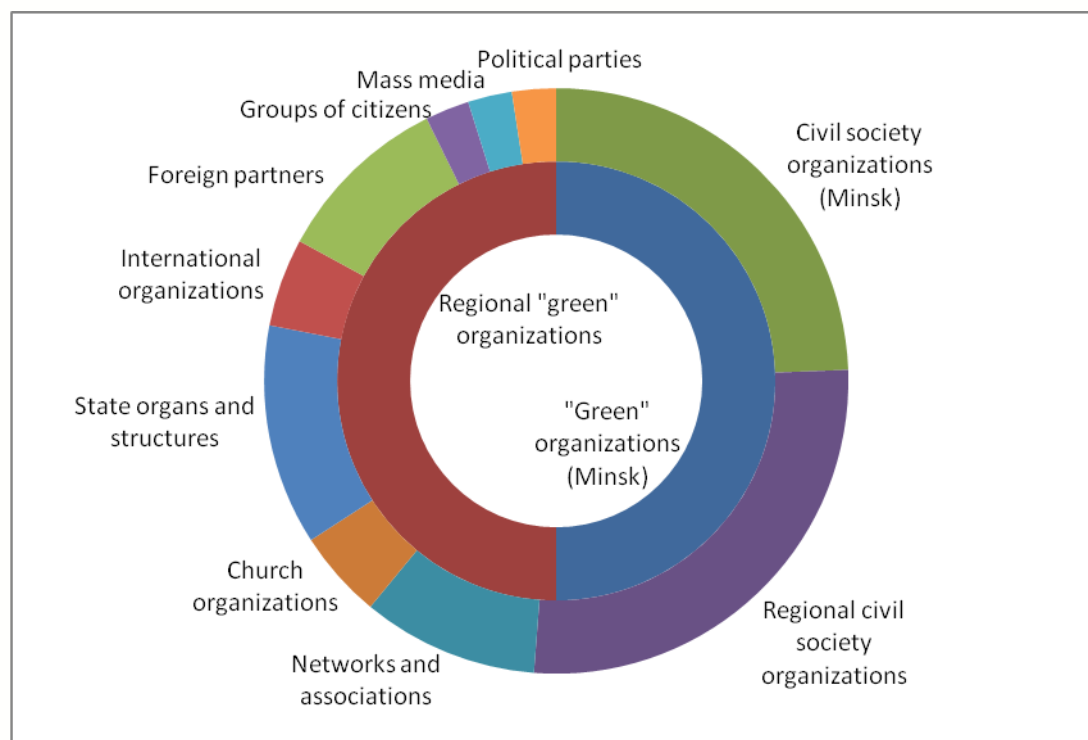
The surroundings of the “green” are built on the basis of the answers of the participants of this research concerning their nearest circle of interaction.

2. Surroundings of the “green”:

- a) Civil society organizations (Minsk and regions), in particular: Educational Center “POST”, Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), etc.
- b) Networks and associations: business unions, Belarusian National Platform of the EaP CSF, International Consortium “EuroBelarus”, RADA-AYP, Association of Life-Long Learning and Enlightenment (ALLLE);
- c) Church organizations: Belarusian Orthodox Church and Interconfessional Office “Christian Social Service”;
- d) State organs and structures: Ministry of Natural Resources, control organs (Ministry of Taxes, KGB, etc.), other ministries, secondary schools, Aarhus Center (Hrodna);
- e) International organizations: UNDP, GEF;
- f) Foreign partners and donors: Denmark’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish NGO Centre for Development Co-operation “Forum Syd”, Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature, International NGO “Pact”;
- g) Mass media;
- h) Groups of citizens at the local level;
- i) Political parties.

It is possible to visually present the types of interacting structures with the help of the following diagram (See Diagram 3) where a share of a sector reflects the relative importance of each type (depending on the quantity of mentions).

Diagram 3. Types of interacting structures



The network of environmentalists' contacts is quite multifarious and ramified, which hypothetically allows them to use the potential of this variety so as to solve large-scale and ambitious tasks (if necessary). A positive moment is a rather significant role of regional organizations in the network of contacts that makes it possible to gain a wide geographical incidence. The situation also favors the expansion of the "green" and the advancement of "green" subjects in the activity and practice of the surrounding organizations. At the same time, the character of interaction depends on the substantial contents of these contacts. Thus, the interaction with other public organizations is evaluated positively, while the cooperation between the state structures and environmentalists is not always characterized in a positive way. In certain cases, there are also contradictory evaluations of the relations with donor organizations. The low importance of contacts with the mass media, i.e. both the total number of mentions and mentions of concrete informational resources, looks a little bit unexpected. It can be explained by the fact that the cooperation with the mass media is thought to be "self-evident"; still, it causes concern. The same can be said about the "groups of citizens at the local level" who are mentioned either in a general sense, acting more likely in a role of a certain rhetorical figure ("population", "local population", "active citizens", etc.), or (in single instances) as groups of local citizens struggling for the preservation of green zones, opposing infill housing or construction of environmentally hazardous objects (atomic power station, chemical factories). Unlike the "self-evident" contacts with the mass media and local population, political parties and movements are really out of the focus of attention of the "green" — they are mentioned either in the context of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaigners (only the Belarusian Party "The Greens"), or, in one case, the disinterest of political parties in environmental subjects is marked.

Now we shall review substantial interpretations of cooperation, including the questions of its meaning and tasks, from three points of view: 1) representatives of Minsk-based environmental organizations; 2) representatives of regional organizations, and 3) representatives of organizations from the immediate surroundings of environmentalists. Thus, we shall try to see different aspects of cooperation as seen by different groups of cooperating structures.

2. Past experience of cooperation and its evaluation

Among collective actions of environmental organizations, the following ones are mentioned more often:

- joint campaigns (anti-nuclear, to protect swamps, woods, and biodiversity, against burning the grass in spring, against spring hunting, to preserve the Biélaviežskaja Pušča [Byelavyezhszkaya Forest], to protect the Minsk Park of the 40th Anniversary of October, etc.);
- educational and awareness-raising campaigns (e.g. the campaign to collect used batteries);
- work to change the legislation and law-enforcement practice (sending of petitions and appeals to state bodies, participation in the work of the Public Environmental Coordination Council at the Ministry of Natural Resources);
- joint actions and vivid events (Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus, Environmental Festival of Children's Creativity and Development “Green Week”, actions called “The Climate, stay!”, “Earth Hour”, “Chernobyl Path”, and other vivid actions);
- work in joint projects (in particular: “Green Map”, “Sustainable consumption to improve the quality of life”).

If representatives of Minsk-based organizations have paid more attention to joint campaigns, attempts to change the legislation, and joint actions (the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus is especially marked), then representatives of regional organizations have been more interested in joint projects. As a whole, representatives of regional organizations are more inclined to consider cooperation in **project terms** (like participation in joint projects). Representatives of both regional and Minsk-based organizations usually pay attention only to the actions, events, or projects in which they acted as organizers or participated directly. Respondents have expressed the following:

“I remember it because I participated in it” or “I did not participate, therefore it was not remembered”, “We were co-organizers”, etc.

Still, representatives of Minsk-based organizations **view cooperation more widely** and more often recall the actions which they have not directly participated in.

Representatives of structures from the “green” surroundings are prone to pay attention to environmentalists’ actions which have received a wide informational resonance:

“I saw it on billboards”, “I heard about it”, “There was some information about it in the mass media”, etc.

They recall: “anti-nuclear” and “swamps” campaigns, campaigns against cutting down trees, to preserve biodiversity, against the construction of environmentally hazardous objects (*“There were several campaigns against building some chemical plants”*), the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus. In this sense, the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign is special as it has been mentioned by the overwhelming majority of respondents from all groups (*“It was the loudest one; it was more or less visible in the mass media”*). Representatives of international organizations, as well as environmentalists, underline in a greater degree the actions and projects in which they took organizational part or which they financed:

“We carry out joint actions”, “We organized”, “We organized a training”, “We created such a platform where representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources met face to face with the public”.

There are various evaluations of success of joint actions — from positive to skeptical and negative. The most positive in their evaluations are the “international” (UNDP, GEF) for whom the successfulness of cooperation has to do with their performance of these or those projects. Representatives of regional organizations, who often consider interaction in project terms, evaluate examples of past cooperation positively as well (*“Good successfulness. Not excellent, but good”*), although national campaigns are evaluated by them more critically. Representatives of Minsk-based organizations are more critical in their attitude towards cooperation:

“I think these campaigns were quite good. Considering the form, the very fact of carrying them out is already some success”, “50/50, it depends on the situation”, “There were different events. That is why there is no uniform evaluation”.

Representatives of Minsk-based organizations think that the most successful event was only the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus:

“Joint forums — they are successful”, “It is possible to mark the Environmental Forum as an event that has united us”.

The basic importance of the Forum, according to respondents, is, first, in the possibility to develop a uniform position on vital issues and, second, in the possibility to demonstrate the environmental public to representatives of state structures as something significant. Representatives of Minsk-based organizations expressed some critical evaluations that had to do, first, with the **evaluation of the results** which were not always reached to the full (*“I do not think that it is a very successful example where activity brings good results”*) and, second, with **organizational difficulties of interaction**:

“Cooperation develops very hard. It is rather difficult to find such forms of influence that would be accepted by all organizations because there are different lines of thought. There is almost always an organization that is leading, while the others are passive enough. Probably, this is where the problem is. There is a feeling that there is only one — you — who fights”.

At the same time, the overcoming of organizational difficulties and contradictions during interaction is already considered to be some success:

“Interaction between organizations and the subjects of this action has been organized quite well. And in most cases, I can say, it was done accurately enough. But that is only in most cases. I cannot say that it always happens so”.

Almost all groups often consider the **information aspect** as a separate criterion of successfulness of their actions:

“Judging by the way the information was disseminated, it is already possible to speak about success”, “Actions of human rights defenders or actions of educational organizations are much less visible, while we have managed to declare about us. In the Belarusian conditions, it is quite good”, “Successfulness of any actions can be evaluated only from the point of view that people, i.e. the public, find out problems”, “There are successes, e.g. the presence of the “green” topic in public discourse. Belarusians become more sensitive to “green” themes: from the topic of garbage to bicycle tracks, etc. More and more people are in sympathy with “green” values. It is possible to consider it the effect of campaigns”.

It may be caused by a desire to at least somehow justify in many respects non-productive actions which skeptics usually pay attention to. There are headshakers both among representatives of Minsk-based and regional organizations; however, the most critical ones among participants of our research are colleagues of environmentalists from the public sector. Sharp evaluations of all groups concern, basically, campaigns of environmentalists:

“The anti-nuclear campaign has failed; the biodiversity preservation campaign is very weak; the Bielaviežskaja Pušča protection campaign is successful; the swamps preservation campaign — it is not clear. Well, everything is fair to middling”, “The nuclear power plant is being built; it means the campaign is not successful”, “There are no positive successes: marshes are still being drained, spring hunting still exists, the nuclear plant is being constructed. Also, I would not say that there have been any successes in the changing of the legislation and that the problem is solved completely”, “If to speak about achievements of campaigns, as far as I know, almost all the trees that they tried to protect are cut down. If to speak about the antinuclear one, there are no results at all. In the issue, to affect the situation is difficult enough”, “I can speak about one more example of “efficiency”: every spring we have a campaign against burning the grass. People write and speak about it. Then, after a year or two, the grass is burned all around again. The efficiency is practically null”.

Analyzing the reasons of unsuccessfulness, respondents say:

- About the general existence conditions of public organizations in the country and the counteraction of “external forces”:

“The state does not understand this problematics”, “There is a state counteraction”, “There is an intervention of external agents, donor programs. Such an insolent intervention, so to speak. When these programs turn into not development assistance programs, but programs that dictate their conditions”;

- About problems with the organization of interaction (different interests of environmentalists, competition for resources, absence of mutual understanding between organizations, weakness of mutual communication);

- About problems with the planning of campaigns:

“They are designed and planned so as if it is possible to achieve something with the help of traditional campaign methods, but they do not work”;

- About problems with the management and responsibility of environmentalists themselves:

“Disorganization”, “They pass their responsibility from hand to hand, thus reducing the efficiency of campaigns”, “On the one hand, national organizations need regional organizations because it is necessary to cover regions in their projects; still, on the other hand, when they just use us as a target group, instead of full-fledged partners, then...”.

One of the basic problems in the description and evaluation of past experience of the interaction between environmentalists and their immediate surroundings is the absence of positive examples of cooperation resulted in the achievement of concrete goals. Positive evaluations concern only communicative formats of interaction (the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus and, to some extent, the “Green Alliance” as a communication platform) or the implementation of projects. The low efficiency of campaigns and cooperative

actions aimed at changing the legislation and framework conditions of activity for public organizations does not create a common positive basis. In this connection, all talks about interaction go from the orientation to achieve results to abstract evaluative forms (e.g. cooperation is always good) or to technical and instrumental aspects of cooperation (teamwork and coordination, absence of conflicts, absence of excessive bureaucracy, etc.). Any fair reflection upon environmentalists' own successes and their joint achievements can touch seriously respondents' existential plan and cause strong emotional reactions. Still, they themselves constate that they have reached practically nothing and that nothing has got off the ground for many years of their work. The comparison of environmentalists' global purposes plan ("to save the planet", "to protect and restore the environment") with the achieved results (implemented projects, successfully carried out events) can both strongly motivate one of them and frustrate others.

3. “We” and “they”: mutual perceptions of environmentalists and their surroundings of cooperation

If in the beginning we have presented a general structure of communication and cooperation, then now we pass to the substantial interpretation of these connections. For all the “green”, the most important connections are communication with other environmental organizations, which can be seen perfectly on the scheme of network interactions (See Diagram 1). It is quite natural that for regional environmental organizations the nearest partners are public organizations from the same district or other regions (and not necessarily environmental ones), as well as their colleagues from the “green” sector in Minsk.

Thus, it is possible to say that in Belarus there exists a more or less sustainable community of environmental organizations that are interworking, although with a different degree of intensity. Who are seen by environmentalists as their partners in the external environment? And, the main thing, — how is the experience of interacting with them characterized?

“Green” and “non-green” civil society organizations

The cluster that is the closest to environmentalists, according to their own evaluations, is **other public organizations and their associations, civil society as a whole**. More often, they mention: Educational Center “POST”, Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), Belarusian National Platform of the EaP CSF, International Consortium “EuroBelarus”, ALLLE. This type of interaction is quite often described in general terms as the necessity of cooperation with kindred organizations (*“These are socially oriented organizations, first of all, and these are Chernobyl organizations, organizations with narrow orientations such animal protection, etc.”*), important groups for educational purposes (*“Youth”*), but also (it is especially frequent among regional organizations) there are blurry formulations about the necessity of cooperation with *“all active citizens”, “all target groups”, etc.*

Interaction with the cluster of non-environmental public organizations takes place within the framework of:

- joint platforms (Belarusian National Platform of the EaP CSF);
- participation in campaigns of the “green”;
- joint actions (“Chernobyl Path”);
- joint projects;
- special assistance rendered to environmentalists by other organizations: e.g. human rights defenders — when “green” activists are arrested, consulting and expert help — in the planning and carrying-out of campaigns (Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), “EuroBelarus”);
- joint researches.

There are various evaluations of this efficiency, but critical remarks prevail:

“In Belarus, the cooperation of the “green” with other public organizations does exist. Periodically, it is even very bright and effective. However, it is not systematic”, “In general, interactions with other organizations are ended in the majority of cases at the level of signing some petitions and proclamations”.

The description of the meaning and tasks of cooperation with other public organizations is way too abstract and is often expressed in general formulations:

“To reach the legislative level”, “Strengthening of influence”, “Strengthening of civil society’s voice”, “To get new groups and audiences involved”, “Exchange of resources”, “Exchange of knowledge”.

Such interaction becomes concrete only in rare cases when it comes to the implementation of projects. Getting other public organizations involved in the “green” topics and attracting other target groups as a whole (youth, women, the disabled, local communities) are thought to be one of the tasks of cooperation with others:

*“The “green” need others just like others need the “green”. We can find support for our purposes among a new audience”, “I can recall an example of a project where we started to work for the first time with the Consumer Rights Protection Association. It is absolutely not an environmental organization which, basically, initially looked at the environmental component indifferently. And towards the end of the project they already understood why this component is important”, “We work with female organizations and the Consumer Rights Protection Association, thus we **strengthen each other** [highlighted by authors]: they have good access to consumers, good contacts, they know this sphere very well; we spread environmental knowledge among consumers. Female organizations — they are more open to environmental questions”.*

Even a smaller degree of concreteness characterizes environmentalists’ answers to the question of what for environmentalists are needed by other organizations. Answering this question, representatives of environmental organizations often use the logic of inverse relations (we are needed by others for the same reasons they are needed by us).

In its turn, it is interesting to look at the way other public organizations see environmentalists and characterize their cooperation with them. For civil society organizations, environmentalists are an important part of the whole public sector. They have: achievements in the field of information representation and a wide circulation of “green” subjects in society; international influence, a strong expert component, influence on the ecologization of other public organizations, wide experience in the organization and carrying-out of joint campaigns (even though they are not always effective). The critical moments are:

- the “green” are confined to environmental subjects and their own language:

“It is not that there is some isolation... However, there is this “greenness”, i.e. they are limited to their own sector. And they use the language that only they can understand when it comes to specific environmental questions...”;

- weakness of management and difficulties of interaction because of buck passing;
- absence of a strategic plan of actions of the “green” at the national level:

“Let’s imagine that there is new power in Belarus. It means it is necessary to create a new policy in the environment protection sphere. It cannot be learned by reading a book”.

Almost all representatives of public organizations mark the Green Alliance's achievements as a successful example of cooperation and the importance of its role not only in the environmental community, but also in the "third sector" as a whole. In particular, it is said:

"The "Green Alliance" understands its role and place in the "third sector". It understands that the agenda of the "green" cannot be limited to the exclusively environmental theme, and if they want to influence, they should be wider than the "green" agenda. They should cover other adjacent areas where there are no topics connected with ecology, but there are topics connected, for example, with civil society. A strong civil society is a guarantee for the "green" that there is a place for their activity. It seems to me that meanwhile the "Green Alliance" demonstrates a good understanding of the situation and is not confined only to its pragmatic interests. This is a recipe for success and orientation in space. They trim the sails to the wind very well. They can see a whole picture, not just environmental questions. If there is a problem with human rights, the "green" understand it, they try to support this agenda, and in reply they receive support of other organizations which were supported by them".

There are also critical remarks concerning the "Green Alliance", though. In particular, colleagues of environmentalists from the "third sector" say that the "Green Alliance" does not work enough with other public organizations, although potentially the latter are prone to cooperate (*"They just need to get interested in environmentally friendly behavior"*).

The "green" and the state

The state and state structures are the next cluster as for the nearness and importance for the "green" community. The attitude to this cluster and the character of interaction with it are ambivalent, which is quite understood under our conditions. E.g. one of respondents has described this interaction as follows:

"State structures, which are meant to be the structures that should cooperate actively with society in general and public organizations in particular, presented themselves as opponents in these relations, as opponents of these ideas".

On the one hand, the state acts as an important partner without whom it is impossible to achieve the implementation of the mission and purposes of environmentalists' activity:

"It is important to cooperate with state structures — otherwise we simply look as a protest mass. In Belarus, if you are a protest mass and do not cooperate with state structures, you are believed to be in opposition and it does not matter whether you are engaged in politics or not".

On the other hand, the state often acts as the main opponent of environmentalists and becomes the factor of separation among environmentalists on the basis of their "politicization":

"It is possible to work with officials, but provided that you are a non-political public organization", "In certain cases, we achieved efficiency, especially when the purpose had no character of counteraction in relation to the actions of the state authorities".

Among state structures, the most important place is occupied by the Ministry of Natural Resources; however, there are other state structures as well — the Minsk City Executive Committee, Ministry of Housing and Communal Services, Ministry of Health, State Committee of Standardization and its Department of Power

Efficiency, State Control Committee, Ministry of Taxation, KGB, Ministry of Industry, Parliament, Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Agriculture, and the state-run mass media. The importance of interaction with local administrations and executive committees is often marked, but concrete examples of interaction are not always successful. Although a certain level of cooperation with various official bodies (schools, libraries) is described as rather positive. Especially, when there is a “common interest”, i.e. a state institution can “put a tick” for its cooperation with public organizations, thus solving its problems with the help of public organizations, and organizations, for their part, can receive a wider platform for their activity.

The “green” and the “international”

The third cluster that is important for environmentalists is international organizations, donors, and foreign partners. They are mentioned as direct partners and, in addition to it, are indirectly present in the talks about project activity and financial resources. The attitude to this interaction has a contradictive character, too. Cooperation with international structures is important; however, sometimes it does not foster environmentalists’ cooperativization (small sizes of grants are mentioned — it makes it impossible to include many partners in activity) and quite often leads to a competition for resources and grants, etc. The topic of money has been mentioned rather often during our research and if the “green” are more likely inclined to mark want of financing, then the structures that are external in relation to them (public and international organizations) do not see in it any especial problem for environmentalists. Moreover, as one of participants of the interviews has noted, the money for environmental subjects is often not used to the full, inter alia because of environmentalists’ weak cooperativization:

“Because there are a slew of donors, even the European Union is a donor. They launch way too many contests aimed at implementing projects in various spheres, including environmental one. And these calls for proposals are announced all year long. One comes to an end, another appears. Public organizations can present their offers; the priority is given to civil society. And so, we, communicating with donors, know that public organizations are not active. And, frequently, the money intended for Belarus is given to organizations from Germany, France. They take the money for Belarus and carry out work ostensibly for Belarus. It is nonsense. Where are our public organizations? Soon, there will be a call for proposals in the European Union; one proposal is 500,000 euros. You are welcome! Where are public organizations? If there are two public organizations, it is already one million”.

The “green” and other clusters

Among other clusters, an important place is occupied by:

- the mass media of different levels (the newspapers “Komsomolskaya Pravda in Belarus”, “Narodnaya Gazeta” and “Va-bank”; the state-run radio, local radio stations, regional newspapers, the Web portal TUT.BY);
- groups of local activists:
“We cooperate a lot with local initiative groups which try to save their park, trees near their houses, and struggle against infill housing. Or with groups of population, if it is for example a nuclear station, with those who live in Astraviec”;
- active citizens, the population as a whole.

In most cases, these groups are mentioned in a positive context of cooperation; environmentalists' insufficient connectedness with the population as a whole is sometimes underlined. Political parties appear in single instances; only the Belarusian Party "The Greens, which participates in the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign, is actually mentioned. Other parties are mentioned only to underline their remoteness from environmental subjects.

4. Environmentalists' mission, purposes, tasks, and the meaning of cooperation

Mission, purposes, and tasks

The perceptions (conceptualization, understanding) of leaders of environmental organizations of the mission and purposes of environmental organizations at the national level can be presented by two mutually supplementing blocks: the first one is linked to the environmental component and the other one — to the public character of activity. Generalizing, it is possible to mention the following formulations of the **environmental mission**:

- to provide people's right to have the healthy environment and health;
- to protect and restore the environment; to preserve the nature of Belarus and Earth.

Environmentalists' **public mission** can be formulated as follows:

- strengthening of participation of the public in decision-making, participation in the formation and implementation of the environmental policy of the state;
- popularization of sustainable development principles;
- environmental education of the population, change of people's world view concerning the environment protection;
- ecologization of all spheres of society's life;
- lobbying of interests of the public, which have to do with environmental questions.

Activists of environmental organizations, who have taken part in the focus groups, have also come to similar formulations. We notice that the perceptions of the mission of environmental organizations have very accurately divided, strange as it may seem, not between participants within the bounds of each focus group, but between two focus groups. During both focus groups, all participants began to develop the first of the expressed thoughts concerning the mission. In the first focus group, there was a point of view that the mission of environmental organizations is to "ecologize all spheres of life" and then the participants basically developed this thought, concretizing and explaining it, "ecologization of public consciousness", "ecologization of society, technologies", etc. Despite the fact that the first speaker also mentioned the topic of participation of environmental organizations in the formation and implementation of the environmental policy, this topic had no development, even though the moderator did try to make the participants to return to it.

The course of the discussion of the mission of environmental organizations during the second focus group was quite the opposite. The first point of view that was expressed was that the basic mission of environmental organizations is to lobby and protect the interests of the public in relations with the state. It was the topic that was developed during the discussion; all participants joined this point of view. After the moderator's follow-up questions, the group came to the position that the environmental component is something that certainly unites all environmental organizations, but the mission formulation remained the same — it is more likely a general idea about the functions of public organizations as such: lobbying of interests, influence on state institutions, compensation of the inflexibility of activity of state structures, education of the population, etc.

It was possible to assume that the perceptions of the mission of the “green” would differ. Still, it is hard to explain why different variants were stressed within the framework of different focus groups. Maybe, environmental activists considered this question not very seriously and, consequently, developed easily the statement of any modus of existence of environmental organizations, or maybe there was an effect of the beginning of a discussion when the groups were not “warmed up” yet. Another possible variant of explanation is the different structures of the two focus groups.

Generalizing all variants received during the two focus groups, it is possible to present the following formulations of the mission (as well as the purposes and tasks because the overwhelming majority of respondents saw no difference between these notions):

- ecologization of all spheres of society’s life;
- participation in the formation and implementation of the environmental policy of the state;
- lobbying of the interests of the public, which have to do with environmental questions;
- prompt response to “emergency situations” in the environmental sphere;
- environmental education of the population.

It is important to mark that the topic of the specificity of the mission, purposes, and tasks of environmental organizations in Belarus has practically not been development. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of respondents appealed to the Belarusian material, while defining the mission of the “green”, they constantly referred to the worldwide or all-European context:

“Any public organization in any country...”, “The “third sector” carries out very accurate functions in any country...”.

Perhaps, the only judgement which referred straightly to the specificity of the Belarusian situation in this question was that the mission of environmental organizations is to develop public activity as such:

“Under the Belarusian conditions, the most important function of public organizations is to develop the initiative, to move people somehow. And ecology gives a chance to do it in the safest way in comparison with other directions”.

The question of whether there are purposes and tasks that are common for all Belarusian organizations has caused serious difficulties among some participants and even some confusion at first. If participants of the first focus group did manage to formulate certain common tasks which are significant for all organizations of the environmental sector in Belarus, then respondents of the second focus group failed to come to any confident conclusions:

“It is difficult to speak for everybody...”, “Here, the environment preservation, for example... Is it an overall objective? Or what?”

The only positive reasoning about the common tasks of the sector during the second focus group has to do with the statement of the weakness of the sector (“It is good that we still exist...”) and the difficult conditions of its existence, which leads to the task to support each other and new organizations so as “not to disappear”.

Participants of the first focus group have named the following common tasks of the environmental sector:

- preservation and restoration of biodiversity;
- education and enlightenment as part of sustainable development;
- environmental rights protection.

At the organizational level, the purposes of the overwhelming majority of environmentalists concentrate on two basic aspects:

- 1) Enlightenment, information distribution, and work with the population (*“To raise awareness, to inform, and to educate the population”*);
- 2) Mobilization of the population, expansion of participation of the public in decision-making concerning ecology.

At the personal level, the majority of respondents have marked that their personal purposes are similar to those of the organization. Of course, it is doubtful; most likely, the participants of our research have hardly ever thought of the correlation between their personal purposes and ambitions and the purposes of their organization and the mission of environmentalists. It is also possible that this question is considered to be private and not to be voiced.

Thus, among different groups of environmentalists, which have participated in the poll, and among their surroundings, there are no essential contrarities in the understanding of the mission and purposes of the “green” sector as a whole. There is no foundational disaccord in the aims of separate environmental organizations either. However, this cohesion of goals can be deceptive because it is formulated in very general forms, without any concreteness, and is not based on the situation in Belarus. None of respondents has mentioned the most important purpose for today’s situation in Belarus, said what has to be done today and now, and “lowered” high discussions about the mission down to the earth, to the material of the concrete situation in the country. In this case, probably, we would have seen deeper divergences in the definition of objectives between environmentalists and their surroundings. This assumption is proved by the fact that the same tendency was observed during the discussion of the purposes and meaning of cooperation.

During the focus groups, it has also been noticed that the deepest discrepancies between environmental organizations working in Belarus exist:

- in different levels of activity (*“There are organizations which work at the operative level and those which work at the strategic level”*);
- in the orientation to a narrow specialization vs. against the orientation to universality;
- in the orientation to receive grants vs. against the orientation to achieve purposes;
- in the orientation to reasonable progress vs. against the movement “back in caves”.

Besides, there is such a point of view that there are no cleavages between environmentalists because everyone is engaged in their own business, separately from others, therefore there is no need either to “concur”, or to “discord”.

The purposes and meaning of cooperation

Here is an example of a fair, but sad statement of one of respondents concerning the question of what for Belarusian environmentalists can be needed by other public organizations:

“If to take into consideration the Belarusian realities, then for nothing... Well, I do not know what for. In general, I cannot imagine what organizations can be needed for by each other in Belarus. Basically, it seems to me that in Belarus there is a problem with solidarity, with any of such cooperative initiatives, etc. This is the kind of organizations that we have — each of them is a cat that walks by itself”.

The isolationism, “niche” consciousness, narrowness of interests of all “green” and separate environmental organizations, which are bound up in their own subjects, have been marked by other respondents, too.

Like in the case with the mission and purposes, the **tasks of cooperation** are seen very abstractly in the majority of cases. Basically, the meaning of cooperation is reduced to the exchange of experience and knowledge, exchange of resources, coordination of opinions of different organizations, strengthening of the general influence and voice of environmentalists or all public organizations. It means respondents speak about methods and tools, possible benefits of cooperation, but not about its concrete goals and tasks.

During the focused group interviews, while striking into the topic of interaction, we tried to find out the point of view of respondents concerning the necessity to unite actions of environmental organizations, as well as to understand what for such cooperation is needed and in what spheres it is most actual.

The majority of respondents admit the necessity of cooperation and interaction by default. It is obvious that it is a certain almost axiological standard “sewn” into the understanding of a correct way of action. However, while discussing concrete examples of cooperation, there arise lots of problems. It is possible to specify two different modi of existence of the notion “cooperation” in respondents’ conceptualization. The first of them is more likely ideological, referring to the idea that all processes are systematic, that global environmental problems cannot be solved at a local level, that efforts of one organization are not enough to essentially change a situation, etc. Despite the unconditional adequacy of such an approach, it is obvious this is the question not about cooperation as such, but the synergy of effects of activity of various players on the environmental field. The second one is instrumental — it considers cooperativization and cooperation between organizations as a tool of achieving certain, more or less specific targets such as:

“Strengthening of the voice of environmental organizations, lobbying of common interests”, “Coordination of actions”, “Strengthening each other by exchanging resources”.

There are way too many opinions concerning in what spheres and topics Belarusian “green” organizations should develop their interaction; all statements can be divided into three groups:

1. Global environmental problems (climate, biodiversity preservation);
2. The usual problems of Belarus (power efficiency, chemical safety);
3. Concrete current topics in Belarus (such as the construction of an atomic power station and the preservation of swamps).

The necessity of cooperation in order to solve the most specific tasks has caused the biggest discussions among respondents. If nobody argued the necessity of cooperation of environmental organizations in order to solve the climate or biodiversity preservation problems, then there were opposite opinions concerning the necessity of cooperating to solve the problem of the construction of the atomic power station in Belarus. It is possible to assume that **the more exactly an existing problem is formulated — the more disagreements there will be concerning the question of including concrete subjects in its solution.**

In general, respondents' reaction to this block of questions shows that the topic of cooperation has been discussed among Belarusian organizations for a long time; however, the successfulness of these discussions is rather doubtful. It is obvious that this topic is ridden to death; also, there is some stereotypeness of its understanding. For example, participants of the second focus group delved into a discussion on whether there is a need to create an association that would unite all environmental organizations and what foundations it could be built on; they also frightened each other by all sorts of negative consequences of the creation of such an organization. It was evident that they tried to avoid the discussion of the tasks and real necessity of cooperation and cooperativization and to discuss the forms, such forms which are well-known, which had been discussed before or which are being discussed now. The reflections on what is or could be a substantial platform for interaction have a very uncertain character:

“Perhaps, sustainable development... A lot of our people have been engaged in it... It happens so that at the state level they speak about it... Sustainable development and the environmental problems I already spoke about — they can really unite, without losing the specificity of separate regions...”, “I would not concentrate on the antinuclear campaign, I would generalize to energetics, i.e. I would widen the topic...”.

Among the topics which solution needs environmentalists' joint efforts, there are:

- power efficiency;
- development of organic agriculture;
- problem of waste;
- construction of the atomic power station;
- cutting-down of trees;
- construction of the Beijing Hotel in Minsk;
- reduction of hazardous emissions in the atmosphere;
- education for sustainable development and enlightenment as a whole;
- chemical safety;
- change of the nature protection legislation.

The themes are formulated more concretely, but at the same time none of respondents-environmentalists has attempted to specify the main question. Speaking about interaction with other public organizations, there is a problem of the conditions of activity for all civil society. Still, a low level of solidarity is underlined:

“The common problem for all organizations is the legislation which regulates the activity of public organizations. However, very little people try to get to the heart of the matter. And if you look at the campaign to cancel Article 193.1 of the Criminal Code, you shall see that there are not many organizations, including environmental ones, which have paid attention to it”.

There is an opinion which is not widespread, but which is typologically very characteristic — cooperation is needed to implement joint projects and to receive a bigger number of grant resources.

Almost all respondents from all groups do not differentiate between overall objectives of cooperation (for the sector, for all the “green”), purposes of cooperation for their own organization, and personal purposes they reach during cooperation. Among all respondents of our research, we have met only one exception from this rule.

5. Obstacles and stimuli to cooperation development

The overwhelming majority of all participants of our research evaluate cooperation as something positive per se. It is sometimes possible to hear an opinion that cooperation can do harm when it has not reached its purposes or generated conflicts and mutual insults. Also, there are opinions that cooperation can do harm if one contacts “politicized” subjects or when the state considers the purposes of this cooperation to be political. Accordingly, all respondents support cooperation development. The factors that **spur the development of cooperation** are grouped in three blocks:

1. Subjective personal factors:

- personal contacts;
- trust increase;
- dialogue ability.

2. Organizational factors:

- experience of joint actions and the specificity of previous interaction;
- authority of an organization;
- presence of financial resources, exchange of knowledge, expert support;
- openness, honesty of cooperation;
- presence of various approaches and work methods;
- presence of cooperation culture.

3. Purposeful factors:

- similar purposes, tasks, common target groups;
- common threats and challenges;
- presence of a problem which cannot be solved by one organization.

The factors that **hamper the development of cooperation**:

1. Subjective personal factors:

- weak mutual support;
- bad interpersonal relations between heads of organizations;
- incompetence of leaders.

2. Organizational factors:

- specialization of organizations (“Everyone has their own garden”);
- orientation of organizations to work independently;
- different methods of work;
- bad management of environmental organizations;
- shortage of resources and potential: people, time, information;

- not enough organizations in the sector;
- reputation of an organization;
- absence of time, absence of staff;
- absence of the information on other organizations, a weak level of mutual communication.

3. External obstacles:

- unfriendly conditions, pressure from state structures;
- absence of effective mechanisms to influence a situation;
- negative image of the “third sector” in the opinion of the state;
- unattainability of purposes in the given conditions (*“It is impossible to solve what cannot be solved”*);
- intervention of donors; they obtrude their purposes;
- geographical remoteness.

4. Contradictions between different groups of organizations:

- Minsk-based and regional organizations are disjunct;
- organizations approved by the state are not ready to carry out protest actions;
- rivalry for resources.

During the **focus groups**, it was practically impossible to receive an answer to the question of what spurs the development of cooperation between the “green”. The only received answer was money (*“The thing that defines interaction or its absence is money”*). Meanwhile, there have been many factors that hamper the development of cooperation between environmental organizations. They can be united in the following groups:

- peculiarities of project financing (i.e. the same money) in different aspects: small sizes of grants (which makes it impossible to include partners in activity), rivalry for grants, etc.;
- personal ambitions, impossibility to find a compromise because of this very factor;
- absence of a distinct specialization of organizations which, according to some participants of the focus groups, complicates interaction;
- presence of a distinct specialization of the majority of “green” organizations and, at the same time, the absence of the “critical mass” of the organizations which are engaged in the same topic;
- organizational and resource weakness of environmental organizations (any joint activity requires a multitude of additional efforts aimed at adjusting the interaction itself; weak organizations cannot just afford these expenses).

One more thesis-reasoning of participants of the focus groups, which has to do with the conceptualization of obstacles to the development of cooperation between the “green”, concerns the difference between the declared purposes and the really pursued ones. These purposes do not always coincide:

“An organization declares something very high and bright in its mission. On the other hand, it is engaged in other matters because it has neither resources, nor desire”.

Accordingly, while it builds interaction, it is orientated to the declared purposes, and if they do not correspond to the real ones, interaction does not happen.

In one of the interviews, there was an opinion we would like to pay additional attention to:

“The presence of identical tasks is not enough for cooperation development. It is essential to realize that these tasks are identical. Many organizations work in their narrow world and do not even know what is being done by other organizations. I think that in Belarus all sectors within the NGO group lack internal communication. Organizations have to understand who does what, what positions they defend, and what plans they have so that it would be possible to create some joint projects. It is very bad that many organizations work in isolation, not being aware of what is being done by their colleagues.

I think it is simply connected with this stage of Belarusian civil society’s development when it is not enough to only realize one’s importance, when there is no comprehension that a certain part of people is engaged in civil society as in civil activity. But what part of society is that? What is it? Is it big or small?

Today we do not understand that there is commonality of interests. As Marx and Lenin wrote once that the working class does not comprehend itself as a class: there are workers at different plants, but there is no understanding that there is a separate class with its own interests. The same is with organizations from different sectors: there is comprehension that there are different organizations, but there is no understanding that it is something uniform which can do something together”.

It is suggested to develop environmentalists’ cooperation with other organizations of the public sector according to the same logic. Respondents speak about the necessity of:

“the general agenda with other organizations when it comes to a number of adjacent questions: human rights, freedom of associations”, “The “green” cannot be out of the swim”.

They underline the presence of many adjacent fields of activity for the “green” and their colleagues from the sector (education, civic participation, “green” economy). It is said that:

“While cooperating with the “third sector”, the activity of the “green” helps very much; they are able to share their wide views with others; they are not politically engaged; it is impossible to consider them representatives of political groups”.

People like to cooperate with the “green” because:

“they are topical, trendy, their topics are progressive, therefore those who consider themselves progressists are pleased to work with the “green”. A part of society and even a part of business reacts to it positively. We see it in everyday life in stores when production is marked “Without Additives”, “Filtered Water”, etc.”

There is an interesting opinion of a representative of an organization external to environmentalists concerning cooperation with donors:

“The dialogue with donors is hindered by nothing. Now it is a favorable time for the “green” to dialogue with donors, a good conjuncture. The only thing is bad management; donors are not sure if the “green” can digest big projects. But it is unequivocal that donors do want to support the “green”. It is them that they want to support more than anybody else”.

The same respondent evaluates the prospects of environmentalists' cooperation with state structures exactly in the opposite way:

“The state sees the “green” as its opponents, not as allies. While solving any questions, it ignores the environmental component. For the state, the main thing is economic efficiency, instead of ecology. If economic interests contradict environmental interests, the state has no problem of choice — economic efficiency is preferred without reservation. For the state, the “green” topic is not sensitive. The state either ignores it, or turns to bay. Suffice it to recall the Chernobyl problem, or any case of an investment project which is being carried out to the detriment of ecology — here the officials consider the “green” not a group of interests, but a “pain in the ass”.”

6. Leaders and leadership

In respondents' interpretations of leadership, there are two interesting tendencies. First, those who consider themselves the leader or consider their organization to be "central", "leading" in their sector or civil society as a whole admit the necessity of such leadership and are inclined to designate others as leaders. Those who are far from leading positions prefer to level the importance of leadership or not to notice either leaders in their own sector, or leaders in civil society. Second, there are considerable differences in the substantial interpretation of leadership. The perceptions of leadership and the necessity of leadership in the "green" sector are variegated. The notion of leadership is fixed at the organization level: it is impossible not to have a leader there; a leader is a necessary structural element of an organization. At higher levels, the perceptions of the essence and necessity of leadership divide. Some environmentalists think that the sector needs no leaders at all; the only thing it may need is "coordinators":

"I believe that there is no need for a leader. Perhaps, there is the need for a coordinator. The leader does not reflect the opinions of all whom he/she represents..."

Others are not against the idea of leadership in the sector of environmental organizations, but have various perceptions of what leadership is and what kind of leadership is needed in this sector. The most widespread conceptualization of leadership has to do with authoritativeness:

"For me, the leader is an accredited authority in something. The best experts, the best examples in their sphere — they do exist", "It is an inevitable process of development of an organization. If an organization develops successfully, then, as a result, it becomes an authority among other public organizations and becomes the leader".

There are much less perceptions of leadership which have to do with the "leading" role of the leader who has to "lead" somewhere (*"The leader is a person who understands the purpose, understands how to achieve it, and organizes a group of thinking citizens so as to gain ends"*) or a representative of the sector, who can express a common position on these or those or questions.

There is a quite noteworthy reaction of some respondents to the question of whether it is possible to call the leader someone from their colleagues in the sector. This reaction is expressed approximately in the following:

"We can speak only for ourselves whom we consider authorities (opinion leaders) or leaders. We do not know what happens in other organizations".

Such reactions are especially expressed (even somehow defiantly) by representatives of regional organizations.

Respondents from different groups have called "leaders of the sector" the following people: **Irina Sukhiy** (*"Mother" of the "green" movement*), **Yaroslav Bekish** (*"One of the most promising leaders of the "green" movement; however, not everybody thinks he is the unconditional leader"*), **Tatiana Novikova** (*"She has a specific function; she is associated with the one campaign (anti-nuclear one), and it is good: the campaign should have its face"*), **Evgeniy Lobanov** (*"He is highly respected as an expert; he generates ideas; he can even work with the state, without getting under its control"*), **Yulia Yablonskaya**, **Irina Usova**; from the "APB Birdlife Belarus" — **Aleksandr Vinchevsky** and **Victor Fenchuk**. However, we should say that during our research this list has also received skeptical reactions (first of all, from regional organizations which in general are more skeptical when it comes to leadership):

“Those who do not receive the “GreenBel” electronic mailing list do not know these people”.

Among the organizations that can be an example for one’s activity, participants have named the following ones: APB, “Ecohome”, CES, and “Green Alliance”.

7. “10-million-euro question”

During our research, we asked respondents a creative question, “If you were the head of a large international foundation and you had a possibility to allot 10 million euros for environmental programs in Belarus, what would it be? What purposes, spheres, subjects?” Respondents’ opinions can be presented in three basic groups:

1. To spend the money on the solution of environmental questions. Basically, such a decision was suggested by international and regional organizations, as well as representatives of organizations focused on the implementation of projects. The subjects of answers varied a lot and it is not possible to name the main themes. Among the topics, there were:

- problem of subaerial water objects that have an anthropogenic load;
- provision of the population with qualitative potable water;
- reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases; atmosphere protection;
- renewable energy sources;
- water purification;
- modernization of industrial enterprises;
- waste, management of solid municipal waste;
- environmental certification;
- biodiversity preservation;
- ecotourism development;
- forestry (fire-fighting, etc.);
- sustainable use of woods;
- ecoinnovations (energetics, power effective houses, education).

It is necessary to separately underline the only one proposal to direct all money to stop the construction of the nuclear power plant as it is beyond the ecology improvement subjects and is aimed at not allowing its deterioration.

2. To spend the money on the involvement of the public in the solution of environmental questions, as well as the development of environmental public organizations. Among the answers, there were:

- involvement of the population in concrete practical initiatives aimed at solving environmental tasks;
- creation and support of regional “green” initiatives;
- mobilization, provision of information, and activation of the population so as to work on environmental problems and similar tasks.

It was separately offered to direct the means to strengthen public organizations (in particular, to support small organizations), infrastructural support, creation of a resource base for organizations, strengthening of the member base (so that organizations could exist with the help of their own resources), etc. Besides, some respondents proposed to use these resources in order to create mechanisms of coordination between the “green”, to consolidate the “green”, and to create and form processes of interaction of environmentalists and all society (or interaction of environmentalists, society, and the states), as well as to develop mechanisms of public control.

3. To spend the money on questions of environmental education, enlightenment, and upbringing. It is the most popular topic which is mentioned this way or another by almost all respondents. Here, there is a wide set of various educational practices:

- environmental enlightenment of citizens in general;
- education for sustainable development (informal, for adults, seniors, youth);
- creation of an educational environmental center (*“A big excursion platform on several hectares where there would be a mini forest, a mini bog, so that there would be such a natural museum: animals, a collector, solar batteries”*);
- environmental educational course for schools;
- creation of TV and radio programs, materials for sites in the environmental education sphere, cartoon films, social advertizing, booklets;
- change of the population’s Weltanschauung;
- launch of an educative program aimed at changing people’s behavior (*“Creation of certain stable practices of behavior”*), formation of practical skills;
- cooperation with local communities so as to disseminate information.

It is obvious that without a wide involvement of institutions of the national educational system, these tasks cannot be solved. However, respondents doubt the efficiency of mass education in Belarus in the achievement of the purposes of environmental education:

“In Belarus, while there is such an educational system, if to spend money on it, everything will be lost, money would be spent on some idiotic things. It will not work in today’s educational system”.

As a whole, participants of our research rather critically evaluate the possibilities of the state to effectively use the means intended for the solution of environmental tasks. The answer to the question “Who should receive the money?” is most often as follows — public structures (for example, according to one of respondents, the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus could define the purposes and topics for which it is necessary to spend means), but *“not state structures, no way!”* Still, there is also an opinion that public organizations are inefficient as well:

“I would not give money to anybody! This money is used to create such subjects whose purpose is project activity. Organizations themselves have to find resources and to develop at the expense of these resources”.

Some respondents offer non-standard proposals concerning the expenditure of means:

- not to spend, but to create a special environmental fund; to spend only the received profit and to constantly increase the authorized capital of this fund;
- to direct means on research and expertise;
- to use means to work out a sustainable development theory.

Let’s notice that in their answers respondents have not mentioned any obvious environmental topic or problem which the majority of participants would like to spend resources on. Their unity is directed on the public focus of activity — development of environmental public organizations, work with the population, and environmental education. Still, at the same time, these questions do not lead to any concrete ways of implementing such

proposals and it remains unclear what exactly environmentalists want to do for the education or work with the population.

Conditionally, judging by respondents' answers to this question, they are:

- **people-oriented organizations** that support the strengthening of the voice of the public in decision-making;
- **education-oriented organizations** that support the enlightenment and involvement of the population in the solution of environmental problems;
- **project-oriented organizations** that support the implementation of concrete projects.

This triad has already appeared in the discussion of other questions (about the mission, leadership, and cooperation purposes) that allows us to speak about the presence of three “accents of character” among environmentalists and their immediate surroundings.

Conclusions and recommendations

At the end we would like to summarize, drawing some conclusions and making some recommendations with respect to actions. We cannot insist on their performance — it is far beyond the research competence, but nonetheless we are sure that the implementation of at least some of them will increase the productivity of cooperative actions of the environmental community. First of all, we are going to characterize this community and then we shall review the questions of its mutual relations with the external environment.

Structure

The “green” organizations mentioned in this text are only a part of the whole environmental public sector in Belarus. However, it is the most active, visible, and independent part of it. The center of gravity is the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus and the “Green Alliance” as the main communication platforms. Still, as a whole, relations in the environmental sector are rather decentralized, while all organizations and their leaders are quite well connected both to each other and to the network centers. The decentralization and variety of organizations (thematic variety, significant amount of regional organizations) is an advantage of the community of environmentalists. This advantage should be strengthened by **involving other environmental organizations in the orbit of activity of the community**. At first, it can be achieved by attracting non-involved environmentalists in the general structure of communication (invitations to the Forum, to meetings of the “Green Alliance”, establishment of personal acquaintance), as well as by means of special researches.

Leaders

It is impossible to say that the community of environmentalists has unconditional leaders, but there are a number of organizations and people (See “Leaders and leadership”) that are thought to have some weight and authority in this community. Basically, it is explained by their role of initiators and “powerhouses” of many joint actions, campaigns, and projects, but nothing more than that. It is difficult to imagine that somebody’s authority will suffice to involve all organizations of this community or at least the majority of them in one joint campaign (even if their general existence is in jeopardy or there is a threat of a local environmental catastrophe). It narrows the potential of mobilization and joint actions of the whole community. Here, it is hard to make certain recommendations because in society as a whole there is a “tradition” to deny leadership and authority, there is no understanding of the essence of these phenomena, there is no established practice of working with them. Environmentalists just reflected the mass moods. Probably, if they pay attention to these questions, the situation will change. A good sign is that the people who are thought to be leaders and authorities by others are inclined themselves to consider others to be leaders and to highly appreciate the necessity of leadership.

Purposes and strategic directives

In the same way, the community of environmentalists limits the abstractness of perceptions of their activity purposes. While there is a similarity at the level of environmentalists’ general mission, then in a concrete situation of actions “here and now”, in the situation of today’s Belarus, their understanding of purposes and ways of activity differs. Being based on the research findings, it is possible to specify three antilogous target orientations (directives, “accents of character”) of different groups in the community of environmentalists.

The first directive is an orientation on the development of civil and public components — it is supposed that the solution of any problems depends, first of all, on the solution of questions of participation of the public in decision-making concerning ecology (and, hopefully, of all policy in the country in general). We call the group, which sticks to this approach, **people-oriented organizations**.

The second directive is aimed at every possible forms of work with the population — it is supposed that only the involvement of most ordinary citizens in public work and independent solution of environmental questions is able to lead to positive changes in the solution of questions of ecology. We call the group, which prefers this approach, **education-oriented organizations**.

The third directive is aimed at achieving concrete results (let small, but improvements in the field of ecology) by means of the implementation of the projects which can be realized in the given conditions. We call the group, which is aimed at implementing projects, **project-oriented organizations**.

All these groups are ideal types, but they characterize distinctions in the community of environmentalists much more vividly than the traditional watershed lines (leaders — activists, Minsk-based — regional organizations; themed groups: climate, energetics, etc.). People with similar directives will understand each other much better despite their regional or thematic differences. And, on the contrary, there will be no consent between firm supporters of different directives. For example, in the question against the construction of the nuclear power plant people-oriented organizations try to stop the construction by influencing decision-making (public hearings, alternative examination, pressure upon decision-making structures), education-oriented organizations work with the local population and launch awareness-raising campaigns about the disadvantages of atomic power energetics, and project-oriented organizations in general avoid such activity because in Belarus to stop the construction of the nuclear power plant is impossible and to achieve improvements in the field of forestry management is possible.

In abstracto, none of approaches is correct or wrong — in one situation, one will be correct and in another situation — something else will be right. However, the uncertainty breaks environmentalists' small forces and deprives the majority of their campaigns of the accurate orientation and productivity. We shall underline at once that deeply analyzing today's situation in Belarus the authors of this research basically tend to the position of people-oriented organizations, which does not exclude the use of the project approach and elements of education-oriented organizations as means of achieving purposes of the organization of public dialogue in the country. However, this position is shared not by all, and environmentalists **should define their strategic priorities in this country during this actual moment of its development**. Probably, during forums, environmentalists should raise and discuss questions of topical problems and strategic actions in the direction of their solution **taking into account the situation which is now present in Belarus**. Both for internal and external use, it would be possible to accept, according to the advice of one of respondents:

“a strategic document or a political “green” document (declaration, memorandum) which would unite all. Although it is a symbolical step, but it is needed much from the point of view of the unity demonstration because the “green” topic is so various that it is possible to sink in all these all varieties. It all should be united by the common idea, by a set of key theses”.

Projects, project logic, and resources

It is necessary to separately review the project logic and project-focused directives which are shared by many respondents. Reception of grant resources in order to carry out projects is the basic source of financing for public organizations — it provides their organizational stability. However, the sense of the activity of public environmental organizations cannot be reduced only to the implementation of projects. If the activity of environmental organizations includes only projects, it essentially limits the possibilities and form of cooperation for a number of organizations. Cooperation with project-oriented organizations becomes possible only in the areas where there is no contradiction with the state and where donors are interested in sponsoring such activity. Thus, the field of activity is narrowed to a possibility of implementing insignificant ecological improvements (usually infrastructural ones) and taking “small steps”, but it deprives of a possibility to set big purposes and to reach changes in the all-national scale. De facto, it deprives environmentalists of all possibilities to correspond to their mission and purpose of the environment preservation and restoration. It is necessary either to lower purposes, or to reconsider the meaning and purposes of projects in the activity of the “green” public.

The project logic also strongly deforms the optics of perception of joint activity — it is not only that joint activity is seen only in the form of projects, but also the basic obstacle to cooperation is seen in the competition for resources. The latter is true least of all if to look at the question not only from the point of view of the implementation of projects. Both respondents from large international organizations and environmentalists’ colleagues from the public sector underline that the situation is exactly the opposite. There are much more financial resources allotted for ecology than Belarusian environmental organizations can use, and the main obstacle to this is their insufficient ability to effectively cooperate and the weakness of management of environmental organizations. It may seem paradoxical, but if environmentalists start to **think less of projects** and start to set more ambitious purposes, if they start to care more of their organizational development and if they are more productive in their joint campaigns, they will receive more resources for their projects.

Surroundings: civil society

The closest and most reliable alien of the Belarusian environmental community is their colleagues from the public sector (other environmentalists and organizations of other thematic orientations). In the network of contacts, there are a lot of various organizations that can be useful to environmentalists or that already effectively cooperate with environmentalists (Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), International Consortium “EuroBelarus”, Educational Center “POST”, ALLLE, Belarusian Consumer Rights Protection Association, entrepreneurs’ unions, etc.). However, this potential is not quite realized and obviously is not used to the full. It is necessary to watch more closely the activity of colleagues from the public sector and to more actively involve other civil society organizations in cooperation with the “green”. It can be done by getting them involved in the discussion of the agenda that is common for environmentalists and other civil society organizations. Environmental organizations should formulate not only ecology-related tasks, but also participate in the formulation of the general strategy of civil society, including adjacent questions of human rights, democracy, mechanisms of public participation and control, civic education, etc. **It would be expedient to involve organizations, which are prone to cooperation with environmentalists, in the process of joint communication concerning strategic questions** (for example, in the discussion of strategic questions during forums of environmental organizations). Also, it would be important to organize periodic meetings of “friends of environmentalists” during which it would be possible to inform them on the current activity and reached results, to include them in the special awareness-raising mailing list.

Best practices and victories

Joint cooperation development could be spurred very much by productive, victorious campaigns that demonstrate the correct approach to their organization and implementation⁴. However, it is necessary not only to make these campaigns win, but also **to correctly analyze the real reasons of the victory and to inform environmentalists and their external surroundings on them**. In the majority of campaigns, environmentalists work as a closed group confined in their community, their questions, and their language. Still, as experience shows, success becomes possible only if other types of organizations are maximally involved in a campaign. The “swamp” campaign shows successes today in many respects because of involving in the planning, organization, and implementation of actions of a wide range of subjects — from expert and professional communities, international organizations, to cultural figures and local groups of citizens.

Media policy, image, public relations

Even though there are many respondents’ very strong accents on the questions of environmental enlightenment, creation of awareness, and education, their actions in this direction leave much to be desired. Here we shall only underline their weak attention to cooperation with the mass media, as well as environmentalists’ low presence on the Internet (only the APB, CES, and “Green Alliance” have got full-blooded web resources). It affects strongly the popularity and image of the environmental community. Due to this fragmentary awareness of environmentalists’ activity, their surroundings do not always have a true impression which is often based on articles about the loudest events in the mass media and on personal acquaintances. If to intentionally underline the negative lines of this image, environmentalists will appear as badly organized abstract dreamers who constantly launch loud, but not productive campaigns and who live on grants from the implementation of obscure projects. Certainly, it does not correspond to reality. A more correct image would be formed if environmentalists informed periodically on their activity in Belarus, for example, in the form of an **annual public report on the condition and development of the environmental organizations sector**.

Studies

Many civil society organizations, which actively cooperate with environmentalists, have not been covered by this research (for example, Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), Educational Center “POST”). Besides, in the ramified network of 52 contacts (See Diagram 1), many organizations have been named by participants of our research already during its course and could not be interviewed. For a more detailed clarification of questions of interaction, from our point of view, it will be expedient to organize additional studies of the nearest “public” surroundings of environmentalists, peripheral organizations which are far from the center, and their interaction with environmentalists’ community. The simplest step is to carry out special questioning of participants of environmental organizations forums concerning their interaction with other organizations. It will help to receive specified and more correct data about the network structure of relations (See Annex 3).

⁴ Of course, it is possible to fairly analyze and study errors and defeats, and it can be much more effective, although it will be much more painful.

Annexes

Annex 1. Joint environmental initiatives in 2010-2013

Within the scope of the present research, we consider **joint environmental initiatives** to be initiatives, which organization and/or implementation is carried out in cooperation of environmental movement representatives with themselves and/or with other subjects of civil society / state structures in order to achieve environmentally significant purposes.

Basic initiatives and their general description⁵

Educating (awareness-raising) campaigns, as well as environmentally friendly behavior popularization campaigns:

- On April, 5th, 2012, in the town of Vilejka (Minsk Region), there was a workshop aimed at working out a strategy of the sustainable development of the region within the frame of the project “Strengthening of public interaction for the sustainable development of Belarus’ rural regions” financially supported by the European Union and Eurasia Foundation (the means of the US Agency for international development USAID). The organizers of the project were the Humanitarian Educational Foundation “Live Partnership” and informational educational establishment “New Eurasia”.
- On March, 23rd, 2013, in Belarus, the international action “Earth Hour” was carried out for the fifth time. It was initiated by the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”. The action was supported by various bodies of executive power, as well as enterprises. Its purpose is to draw attention to the problem of climate change and global warming by means of switching off light and electric appliances for an hour.
- On April, 20th — 28th, 2013, there was the second Belarus Sustainable Development Week (the first Week was organized in 2004). The organizers of the Week were the Minsk International Educational Center named after Johannes Rau and the Belarus Support Program of the Federal Government of Germany. It was carried out in partnership with the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, Sports and Tourism Ministry, Transport and Communications Ministry, Scientific-Research Economic Institute of the Ministry of Economics, Department of Law of Belarusian State University, International State Environmental University named after A.D. Sakharov, National Public Association “Belarusian Union of Workers of Automobile Transport and Road Management”, etc.
- In April, 2013, there was an awareness-raising campaign against burning the dry grass organized by the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”, Public Association “Ecohome”, Centre for

⁵ The material on the implemented actions is collected on the basis of the public information on the following web resources: **Belarusian regional news** (<http://regionby.org>), **Department of Education of the Brest Regional Executive Committee** (<http://brest-region.edu.by>), **Znanya Yunosti** (<http://zn.by>), **Web portal TUT.BY** (<http://news.tut.by>, <http://finance.tut.by>), **EuroBelarus.Info** (<http://eurobelarus.info>), **Belarusian News** (<http://naviny.by>), **Ecohome** (<http://ecohome-ngo.by>), **Change.Org** (<http://www.change.org>), **Belarusian Green Portal** (<http://greenbelarus.info>), **Telegraf.By** (<http://telegraf.by>), **Charter’97** (<http://charter97.org>), **Naša Niva** (<http://nn.by>), and **Free Region** (<http://freeregion.info>).

Environmental Solutions (CES), International Public Association “Ecoproject Partnership”, Environmental and Regional Studies NGO “Nerush”, and the Belarusian Red Cross Society in cooperation with the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, as well as the Emergency Situations Ministry.

- In May, 2013, there was an action during which Michael Jackson's portrait was made of household waste. The action was carried out in cooperation with the Scientific and Production Group “Environmental Alternative” and artist Yulia Kovsh.
- In May-June, 2013, there were numerous actions within the context of the action “The climate, Stay!”. The action was organized by the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance” and the Regional Public Association “Homiel Association Children and Youth” (ASDEMO) in cooperation with Belarusian cultural groups and communities (plastic theater “InZhest”, rock group “Kryvi”, etc.). During its events, there were distributions of “live water” and berries, exchanges of scrap paper for pots with basil sprouts, repairing of bicycles; the Belarusian swamps protection topic was raised, etc.
- On June, 1st — 2nd, 2013, there was the Children's Environmental Creativity and Development Festival “Green Weekend” organized by the Public Association “Ecohome” and the Centre for Environmental Solutions (CES). Within the limits of the Festival, there were children's creative workshops aimed at environmental education.
- The Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance” annually organizes the Environmental Activists School.

Actions to protect flora and/or fauna:

- In April, 2010, the NGO “APB Birdlife Belarus” (APB) and the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry organized the action “Lake Labiažy: for birds and people. Together!”. Its purpose was to construct floating islets for birds.
- In February, 2011, the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”, NGO “APB Birdlife Belarus” (APB), and Belarusian Party “The Greens” acted with a joint statement against the carrying-out of the wisent hunting auction. The APB sent inquiries to the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, Ministry of Forestry, and State Flora and Fauna Protection Inspection at the president of the Republic of Belarus concerning the legality of carrying out such an auction. The auction was rendered abortive several times by Internet users; subsequently the winner of the auction refused his right to hunt.
- After the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus accepted Decree №794 d/d June, 17th, 2011 “About some questions of peat extraction and optimization of the system of especially protected natural territories”, which allows the extraction of peat on the territory of several protected swamps, within the pale of the Belarusian swamps protection campaign, there have been numerous actions. In particular, there was a sign-in for the petition within the bounds of the open appeal to protect Belarusian swamps (this appeal was signed by the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”, NGO “APB Birdlife Belarus” (APB), Public Association “Ecohome”, International Public Association “Ecosphere”, Nature Protection Team “EcoUnion”, Centre for Environmental Solutions (CES), Regional Public Association “Homiel Association Children and Youth” (ASDEMO), International Public Association “Ecoproject”, International Public Association “Ecoproject Partnership”, International Environmental

Public Association “Nature and We”, Public Association “Belarusan Women Coordination Center”, Public Association “Public Initiatives Informational Support Center “The Third Sector”, Public Association “Belarusan Socially-Environmental Union “Chernobyl”). A number of actions conducted within the framework of the campaign “The climate, Stay!” was dedicated to the swamps protection topic. On April, 24th, 2013, as part of the Belarusan swamps protection campaign organized by the “Green Alliance”, APB, CES, and “Ecohome”, an open appeal to preserve the marsh territories and borders of the Vieciarevičski (Veterevichsky) Landscape Reserve.

- Since December, 2011, there have been a lot of appeals and other actions against the destruction of the Minsk Park of the 40th Anniversary of October, in which activists of environmental organizations (Public Association “Ecohome”, Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”, etc.), politicians, public figures, representatives of creative intelligentsia, Belarusan Orthodox Autocephalous Church, and the people who live near the park have participated. However, the construction of the Beijing hotel complex was started in this park and is still going on. On March, 13th, 2013, the initiative group protecting the Park of the 40th Anniversary of October sent an appeal to the Presidential Administration with the request to stop the destruction of park zones in Minsk because the authorities had broken their own public promises to widen the park zone and to include in it the landscape-recreational zone between the River Svislač and Smalenskaja Street in connection with the construction of the Beijing hotel complex.
- Since 2012, there have been numerous appeals of inhabitants of the town of Sónim (Hrodna Region) and the Sónim Democratic Forces Association to protect local woods against cutting down in connection with the construction of houses in the microdistrict of Albertin. In January, 2013, despite the appeals, the forest was cut down.
- In January, 2013, the NGO “APB Birdlife Belarus” (APB) and the Scientifically-Practical Bioresources Center of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus conducted a national campaign of winter account of birds aimed at drawing Belarusans’ attention to the observation of birds and their problems.
- On March, 13th, 2013, the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance” sent a statement to the Administration of the Lenin District of Minsk and the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry concerning the project “Reconstruction of the Dynamo Stadium complex in Minsk. Parking on Uljanaŭ Street”, opposing the parking construction as it contradicts the requirements of the General Plan of Minsk and the results of a public discussion of the object.

Campaigns against the construction of environmentally hazardous objects:

- With the beginning of preparations to build the Belarusan-Chinese Industrial Park (Smalavičy District, Minsk Region), the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”, Public Association “Ecohome”, Civic Campaign “Tell the Truth!”, and others launched a campaign to stop this construction. Within the scope of this campaign, the “Ecohome” and “Green Alliance”, in particular, organized the carrying-out of a public environmental examination of the project documentation of the general plan of this industrial park, sent an appeal to the Smalavičy District Executive Committee with a demand to reconsider the conclusions of the Commission that had carried out a discussion of the project of the general plan, as well as organized an “Expert analysis of the minutes of the public discussions of the general plan of the Belarusan-Chinese Industrial Park”.

Actions against the construction of the Belarusian A-plant, as well as actions of symbolical solidarity in connection with the anniversaries of the Chernobyl catastrophe:

- In September, 2011, an appeal with the request to refuse the financing of the construction of the Belarusian atomic power station and to stop Russia's participation in this project was addressed to the President of the Russian Federation. The appeal was signed by the Belarusian Party "The Greens", Public Association "Ecohome", Regional Public Campaign "Astraviec A-plant is a crime!", Commission of a public environmental examination of the Belarusian atomic power station, Organizing Committee to create the Movement "Scientists for Denuclearized Belarus", as well as the International Group "Ecoprotection".
- In February, 2013, the participants of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign, Belarusian Party "The Greens", Public Association "Ecohome", Organizing Committee to create the Movement "Scientists for Denuclearized Belarus", Regional Public Campaign "Astraviec A-plant is a crime!", as well as the Commission of a public environmental examination of the Belarusian atomic power station, acted with an open appeal with the requirement to terminate the construction of the atomic power station in Astraviec, which was addressed to the Presidents of Belarus and Russia, Prime Minister and Minister of Energetics of Belarus, as well as Director General of Rosatom.

Statements and actions within the frame of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign:

- On June, 16th, 2010, the representatives of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign, Public Association "Ecohome", and Belarusian Party "The Greens" together with the Environmental NGO "Atgaja", International Group "Ecoprotection", and Lithuanian Green Party organized a picket in Vilnius (Lithuania) in connection with the round table "Regional projects in the field of nuclear power" with participation of the IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano and official representatives of Lithuania, Russia, Belarus, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Poland.
- On May, 31st, 2012, the Presidents and Governments of Belarus and Russia, as well as the European Commission, were sent an open appeal which draws attention to the threats of building the Belarusian atomic power station. The appeal was signed by heads of the Movement "Scientists for Denuclearized Belarus", Public Association "Ecohome", Commission of a public environmental examination of the project of the Belarusian atomic power station, Regional Public Campaign "Astraviec A-plant is a crime!", and Belarusian Party "The Greens".
- On June, 27th, 2012, in Vilnius (Lithuania), the activists of the Public Association "Ecohome" and Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign took part in the meeting against the amendments to the Lithuanian legislation concerning atomic energetics.
- On July, 27th, 2012, the Public Association "Ecohome", Commission of a public environmental examination of the project of the Belarusian atomic power station, and Belarusian Party "The Greens" acted with a joint statement-protest in connection with the signing of the general contract on the construction of the Belarusian atomic power station.
- In March, 2013, Belarusian environmentalists and politicians acted with a joint statement concerning the fact that Belarus infringed international obligations while constructing the atomic power station in the town of Astraviec. It was signed by the heads of the Belarusian Party "The Greens", Party "Belarusian

People's Front", Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Hramada), organizing committees to create the parties "Belarusian Christian Democracy" and "Belarusian Movement", Civic Initiative "European Belarus", Belarusian Radio and Electronics Workers' Union (REP), Public Association "Ecohome", Regional Public Campaign "Astraviec A-plant is a crime!", and Commission of a public environmental examination of the project of the Belarusian atomic power station.

- In Minsk, every year, there are actions of symbolical solidarity "Chernobyl Path", which unite various political parties, public organizations, including representatives of the environmental movement. In 2013, the representatives of the United Civic Party, organizing committees to create the parties "Belarusian Christian Democracy" and "Belarusian Movement", Movement "For Freedom", Belarusian Party "The Greens", and Public Association "Ecohome" took part in a session of the committees that organized and carried out the "Chernobyl Path-2013".

Actions against infill housing (insertion of additional housing units into an already existing neighborhood):

- On December, 20th, 2012, a group of public organizations and initiatives addressed to the Architecture and Construction Ministry, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, as well as the Minsk City Executive Committee, with joint offers to introduce changes into the current legislation in order to introduce the practice of carrying out public discussions of projects in the field of architectural, town-planning, and building activity with local residents, stakeholders, and representatives of real estate developers and regional administrations. Among the civil society structures, which proposed it, there were the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus "Green Alliance", City Public Association "European Prospect" (Minsk), Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), International Consortium "EuroBelarus", Public Association "Belarusian Association of Journalists", Educational Public Association "Leŭ Sapieha Foundation", Human Rights Defending Movement "Our Belarus", Cultural and Educational Public Association "Humanitarian Bridge" (Brest), Civic Initiative "Mahiloŭ Educational Initiative", Civic Initiative "Homiel Democratic Forum", as well as initiative groups of local residents from Minsk who oppose infill housing in the microdistrict of Uručča-2, in the area of 2nd Lane of Rosa Luxemburg, Krasnaja Street, and defenders of the Parks of the 40th Anniversary of October and of Friendship of Peoples.
- On April, 4th, 2013, during a press conference, the leaders of Minsk local initiatives from the microdistricts of Uručča-2 and Uschod-2, from Cnianskaja, Jakub Kolas, Gaj, Viera Charužaja, Pulichaŭ, and Pieršamajskaja Streets signed a memorandum of cooperation and mutual assistance for an effective struggle against infill housing, protection of trees and environmental conditions in Minsk.

Creation of platforms of interaction between the "green" and other civil society organizations:

- On April, 20th, 2013, within the context of the first round table "Chernobyl. Astraviec. Evolution of the Catastrophe" organized by the organizing committee "Chernobyl Path-2013" as a platform to discuss topical environmental problems, the Belarusian Environmental Committee was created; it included representatives of the Civic Campaign "European Belarus", Organizing Committee to create the party "Belarusian Movement", Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign, Belarusian Left Party "Fair World", Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Hramada), Civic Campaign "Tell the Truth!", Civic Campaign "For Fair Elections!", United Civic Party, and Party "Belarusian People's Front".

Annex 2. Report on focus group studies

During our research, there have been 2 focus groups with environmental activists from various environmental public organizations (Minsk-based and regional ones). The average duration of a focus group is 2 hours; the total number of participants is 13 people; 3 of them are from regions.

The task of the focus group research was to find out the attitude of ordinary members and activists of environmental organizations to interaction between the “green”, the evaluation of the actual condition of this interaction and prospects of its development.

The first block of questions for the focus groups concerned the mission, purposes, and tasks of environmental organizations and their specificity in Belarus.

The perceptions of the mission of environmental organizations have very accurately divided, strange as it may seem, not between participants within the bounds of each focus group, but between the two focus groups. During both focus groups, all participants began to develop the first of the expressed thoughts concerning the mission. In the first focus group, there was a point of view that the mission of environmental organizations is to “ecologize all spheres of life” and then the participants basically developed this thought, concretizing and explaining it, “ecologization of public consciousness”, “ecologization of society, technologies”, etc. Despite the fact that the first speaker also mentioned the topic of participation of environmental organizations in the formation and implementation of the environmental policy, this topic had no development, even though the moderator did try to make the participants to return to it.

The course of the discussion of the mission of environmental organizations during the second focus group was quite the opposite. The first point of view that was expressed was that the basic mission of environmental organizations is to lobby and protect the interests of the public in relations with the state. It was the topic that was developed during the discussion; all participants joined this point of view. After the moderator’s follow-up questions, the group came to the position that the environmental component is something that certainly unites all environmental organizations, but the mission formulation remained the same — it is more likely a general idea about the functions of public organizations as such: lobbying of interests, influence on state institutions, compensation of the inflexibility of activity of state structures, education of the population, etc.

It was possible to assume that the perceptions of the mission of the “green” would differ. Still, it is hard to explain why different variants were stressed within the framework of different focus groups. Maybe, environmental activists considered this question not very seriously and, consequently, developed easily the statement of any modus of existence of environmental organizations, or maybe there was an effect of the beginning of a discussion when the groups were not “warmed up” yet. Another possible variant of explanation is the different structures of the two focus groups.

Generalizing all variants received during the two focus groups, it is possible to present the following formulations of the mission (as well as the purposes and tasks as the overwhelming majority of respondents saw no difference between these notions):

- ecologization of all spheres of society's life;
- participation in the formation and implementation of the environmental policy of the state;
- lobbying of interests of the public, which have to do with environmental questions;
- prompt response to "emergency situations" in the environmental sphere;
- environmental education of the population.

It is important to mark that the topic of the specificity of the mission, purposes, and tasks of environmental organizations in Belarus has practically not been development. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of respondents appealed to the Belarusian material, while defining the mission of the "green", they constantly referred to the worldwide or all-European context:

"Any public organization in any country...", "The "third sector" carries out very accurate functions in any country...".

Perhaps, the only judgement which referred straightly to the specificity of the Belarusian situation in this question was that the mission of environmental organizations is to develop public activity as such:

"Under the Belarusian conditions, the most important function of public organizations is to develop the initiative, to move people somehow. And ecology gives a chance to do it in the safest way in comparison with other directions".

The question of whether there are purposes and tasks that are common for all Belarusian organizations has caused serious difficulties among some participants and even some confusion at first. If participants of the first focus group did manage to formulate certain common tasks which are significant for all organizations of the environmental sector in Belarus, then respondents of the second focus group failed to come to any confident conclusions:

"It is difficult to speak for everybody...", "Here, the environment preservation, for example... Is it an overall objective? Or what?"

The only positive reasoning about the common tasks of the sector during the second focus group has to do with the statement of the weakness of the sector (*"It is good that we still exist..."*) and the difficult conditions of its existence, which leads to the task to support each other and new organizations so as *"not to disappear"*.

Participants of the first focus group have named the following common tasks of the environmental sector:

- preservation and restoration of biodiversity;
- education and enlightenment as part of sustainable development;
- environmental rights protection.

While striking into the topic of interaction, we tried to find out the point of view of respondents concerning the necessity to unite actions of environmental organizations, as well as to understand what for such cooperation is needed and in what spheres it is most actual.

The majority of respondents admit the necessity of cooperation and interaction by default. It is obvious that it is a certain almost axiological standard “sewn” into the understanding of a correct way of action. However, while discussing concrete examples of cooperation, there arise lots of problems. It is possible to specify two different modi of existence of the notion “cooperation” in respondents’ conceptualization. The first of them is more likely ideological, referring to the idea that all processes are systematic, that global environmental problems cannot be solved at a local level, that efforts of one organization are not enough to essentially change a situation, etc. Despite the unconditional adequacy of such an approach, it is obvious this is the question not about cooperation as such, but the synergy of effects of activity of various players on the environmental field. The second one is instrumental — it considers cooperativization and cooperation between organizations as a tool of achieving certain, more or less specific targets such as:

“Strengthening of the voice of environmental organizations, lobbying of common interests”, “Coordination of actions”, “Strengthening each other by exchanging resources”.

There are way too many opinions concerning in what spheres and topics Belarusian “green” organizations should develop their interaction; all statements can be divided into three groups:

1. Global environmental problems (climate, biodiversity preservation);
2. The usual problems of Belarus (power efficiency, chemical safety);
3. Concrete current topics in Belarus (such as the construction of an atomic power station and the preservation of swamps).

The necessity of cooperation in order to solve the most specific tasks has caused the biggest discussions among respondents. If nobody argued the necessity of cooperation of environmental organizations in order to solve the climate or biodiversity preservation problems, then there were opposite opinions concerning the necessity of cooperating to solve the problem of the construction of the atomic power station in Belarus. It is possible to assume that the more exactly an existing problem is formulated — the more disagreements there will be concerning the question of including concrete subjects in its solution.

In general, respondents’ reaction to this block of questions shows that the topic of cooperation has been discussed among Belarusian organizations for a long time; however, the successfulness of these discussions is rather doubtful. It is obvious that this topic is ridden to death; also, there is some stereotypeness of its understanding. For example, participants of the second focus group delved into a discussion on whether there is a need to create an association that would unite all environmental organizations and what foundations it could be built on; they also frightened each other by all sorts of negative consequences of the creation of such an organization. It was evident that they tried to avoid the discussion of the tasks and real necessity of cooperation and cooperativization and to discuss the forms, such forms which are well-known, which had been discussed before or which are being discussed now. The reflections on what is or could be a substantial platform for interaction have a very uncertain character:

“Perhaps, sustainable development... A lot of our people have been engaged in it... It happens so that at the state level they speak about it... Sustainable development and the environmental problems I already spoke about — they can really unite, without losing the specificity of separate regions...”, “I would not concentrate on the antinuclear campaign, I would generalize to energetics, i.e. I would widen the topic...”.

During the focus groups, it has also been noticed that the deepest discrepancies between environmental organizations working in Belarus exist:

- in different levels of activity (*“There are organizations which work at the operative level and those which work at the strategic level”*);
- in the orientation to a narrow specialization vs. against the orientation to universality;
- in the orientation to receive grants vs. against the orientation to achieve purposes;
- in the orientation to reasonable progress vs. against the movement “back in caves”.

Besides, there is such a point of view that there are no cleavages between environmentalists because everyone is engaged in their own business, separately from others, therefore there is no need either to “concur”, or to “discord”.

In order to understand the background which respondents’ perceptions of cooperation prospects are based on, we have tried to receive an evaluation of the already available precedents and to discuss the criteria of evaluating interaction as for its successfulness and efficiency. The examples of joint actions of the “green” sector over the last 5 years are: the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus, the working-out of a new Water Code and a national strategy of sustainable development, the opening of sustainable development libraries, local agendas of sustainable development, the creation of the Association of Environmental NGOs of Belarus “Green Alliance”, the carrying-out of the Belarusian swamps protection campaign, the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign, the Belarusian residential sector power efficiency project, participation in international actions such as “Earth Hour”, etc.

It is more difficult when it comes to the joint initiatives efficiency evaluation. As a rule, the efficiency indicator is the very fact of cooperation (*“experience of joint actions”*), or efficiency is described through the contents of activity, which is being carried out, and the fact of its usefulness. When respondents try to evaluate the real efficiency of these or those initiatives, evaluations are rather modest:

“One more successful project is local agendas. Some of them do not work, but it is a question of conditions”, “It is all very circumstantial. It all depends on the purpose. What is the purpose of the Environmental Forum? To gather all together, to discuss problems, and — that’s it, the purpose is achieved”, “One more example of “efficiency”: every spring we have a campaign against burning the grass. People write and speak about it. Then, after a year or two, the grass is burned all around again. The efficiency is practically null”.

Nevertheless, the successfulness and importance of such actions as the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus, for example, is evaluated by respondents rather high. The basic importance of the Forum, according to respondents, is, first, in the possibility to develop a uniform position on vital issues and, second, in the possibility to demonstrate the environmental public to representatives of state structures as something significant.

It was practically impossible to receive an answer to the question of what spurs the development of cooperation between the “green”. The only received answer was money (*“The thing that defines interaction or its absence is money”*). Meanwhile, there have been many factors that hamper the development of cooperation between environmental organizations. They can be united in the following groups:

- peculiarities of project financing (i.e. the same money) in different aspects: small sizes of grants (which makes it impossible to include partners in activity), rivalry for grants, etc.;
- personal ambitions, impossibility to find a compromise because of this very factor;
- absence of a distinct specialization of organizations which, according to some participants of the focus groups, complicates interaction;
- presence of a distinct specialization of the majority of “green” organizations and, at the same time, the absence of the “critical mass” of the organizations which are engaged in the same topic;
- organizational and resource weakness of environmental organizations (any joint activity requires a multitude of additional efforts aimed at adjusting the interaction itself; weak organizations cannot just afford these expenses).

One more thesis-reasoning of participants of the focus groups, which has to do with the conceptualization of obstacles to the development of cooperation between the “green”, concerns the difference between the declared purposes and the really pursued ones. These purposes do not always coincide:

“An organization declares something very high and bright in its mission. On the other hand, it is engaged in other matters because it has neither resources, nor desire”.

There are various expectations of the development of cooperation between the “green”. In this question, as well as in the previous one, respondents, first of all, spoke about minuses, dangers, caused by the prospect of increasing the level of cooperation between environmental organizations. For some of them, the centralization of activity is as a positive effect; for others (majority) — negative. As it has already been said earlier, while discussing the strengthening of interaction, respondents pass at once to the discussion of certain institutionalized forms (association, a certain umbellate structure) and there appears the fear of bureaucratization, monopolization of management and resources. The pluses that respondents see in the strengthening of cooperation lead directly to a conjectured form of this cooperation:

“As for the positive moments, I would add here the presence of common resources — the common base of lawyers, for example. It is if we speak about an ideal. The common base which can help with consultations on any question”, “Concentration of resources. Ideally, on a free-of-charge basis so that each of us could have access to it. Plus, consultations for other organizations and experts concerning possible environmental problems and even assistance in the solution of organizational moments”.

Only in one case, as a possible benefit of the development of cooperation between environmental organizations, the increase of the sustainability and efficiency of actions through the strengthening of the voice of the “green” and lobbying of their common interests has been mentioned.

Leadership and leadership potential. The perceptions of leadership and the necessity of leadership in the “green” sector are variegated. The notion of leadership is fixed at the organization level: it is impossible not to have a

leader there; a leader is a necessary structural element of an organization. At higher levels, the perceptions of the essence and necessity of leadership divide. Some environmentalists think that the sector needs no leaders at all; the only thing it may need is “coordinators”:

“I believe that there is no need for a leader. Perhaps, there is the need for a coordinator. The leader does not reflect the opinions of all whom he/she represents...”.

Others are not against the idea of leadership in the sector of environmental organizations, but have various perceptions of what leadership is and what kind of leadership is needed in this sector. The most widespread conceptualization of leadership has to do with authoritativeness:

“For me, the leader is an accredited authority in something. The best experts, the best examples in their sphere — they do exist”, “It is an inevitable process of development of an organization. If an organization develops successfully, then, as a result, it becomes an authority among other public organizations and becomes the leader”.

There are much less perceptions of leadership which have to do with the “leading” role of the leader who has to “lead” somewhere (“The leader is a person who understands the purpose, understands how to achieve it, and organizes a group of thinking citizens so as to gain ends”) or a representative of the sector, who can express a common position on these or those or questions.

There is a quite noteworthy reaction of some respondents to the question of whether it is possible to call the leader someone from their colleagues in the sector. This reaction is expressed approximately in the following:

“We can speak only for ourselves whom we consider authorities (opinion leaders) or leaders. We do not know what happens in other organizations”.

Such reactions are especially expressed (even somehow defiantly) by representatives of regional organizations. Respondents from different groups have called “leaders of the sector” the following people: Irina Sukhiy, Yaroslav Bekish, Tatiana Novikova, Evgeniy Lobanov, Aleksandr Vinchevsky, and Viktor Fenchuk. However, we should say that during our research this list has also received skeptical reactions (first of all, from regional organizations which in general are more skeptical when it comes to leadership):

“Those who do not receive the “GreenBel” electronic mailing list do not know these people”.

Among the organizations that can be an example for one’s activity, participants have named the following ones: APB, and “Ecohome”.

What are the immediate surroundings of the “green”? Among those with who environmental organizations mainly cooperate, there are:

- state structures;
- local authorities;
- business structures;
- non-environmental NGOs;
- mass media;
- “public at large”;
- target groups;

- “services providers” (freelancers, experts, etc.);
- international foundations.

Of course, different kinds of interaction develop in different ways. Interaction with foundations is described as *“interaction at the level of applications”* which results in *“rivalry, rather than cooperation”*. The most conflict relations are those with local authorities (local administrations), tax and other supervising bodies, as well as with large business structures when environmentalists are forced to interact with them. Although a certain level of cooperation with various official bodies (schools, libraries) is described as rather positive. Especially, when there is a “common interest”, i.e. a state institution can “put a tick” for its cooperation with public organizations, thus solving its problems with the help of public organizations, and organizations, for their part, can receive a wider platform for their activity. Let's notice that the topic of cooperation with the state structures was discussed by respondents much more willingly than the topic of interaction with other NGOs, let alone target groups which have not been mentioned by respondents at all.

Among the overall objectives and tasks, within the framework of which there can be cooperation of the “green” with their surroundings, regional development has been named by representatives of regional organizations. Another variant, in which interaction of different subjects is possible, is the situation when there is an *“urgent sharp problem everybody is ready to solve”*.

Annex 3. Sample of a questionnaire for participants of the Forum of Environmental Organizations of Belarus concerning the character of contacts with other organizations

Questionnaire

Name of organization _____

Location of organization _____

Which of these organizations has your organization cooperated with during the previous year? Also, specify the intensity of these contacts.

	Organization	Cooperate constantly	Cooperate from time to time	Cooperate sometimes
1.	"Green Alliance"			
2.	CES			
3.	"ENDO"			
4.	"Ecohome"			
5.	"Nerush"			
6.	"Ecoproject Partnership"			
7.	"Green Hrodna"			
8.	"APB Birdlife Belarus"			
9.	ASDEMO			
	Other contacts (specify):			
53.				

Interaction potential of environmental organizations in the solution of common tasks

The report is based on the research findings

Authors: **Andrei Yahorau, Aksana Shelest, Karyna Shyla**

Editor: **Andrei Shutau**

Andrei Yahorau is the Director of the Centre for European transformation (CET), Master of Political Science. He graduated from Belarusian State University, department of political science, and holds a master's degree in political science. He has been working in the political research area since 2001. The focus of research interests: transformation of the former Soviet Union space, civil society, political transformations in Belarus and the Eastern Partnership region, European studies.

Aksana Shelest is a Senior analyst of the Centre for European transformation, PhD in sociology. She graduated from the Sociology Department of Belarusian State University and did her postgraduate studies in the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus. Her research interests include religiousness transformation, social communication and communication techniques, methodology and sociological research methods

Karyna Shyla is a Junior analyst of the Center for European Transformation. In 2013, she graduated from the International Relations Department of Belarusian State University with a specialization in International Law, the branch of study is the European Law.

Center for European Transformation (CET) is an independent think-tank, founded in March 2010. CET is integrated into the International Consortium "EuroBelarus".



Center for European Transformation
Minsk, Belarus

cet@eurobelarus.info

cet.eurobelarus.info

+375 29 6185388



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