

Belarus is a country with a high level of urbanization. Over 78% of the country's population lives in 115 cities, ranking Belarus [48th](#) out of 195 countries in terms of urbanization. The growing competition among cities to attract human resources and investments poses various complex challenges for ensuring high quality of life and infrastructure while simultaneously reducing the impact on the environment.

According to the data from the ecological bulletin "Environmental State of Belarus," the **greatest environmental impacts** in 2022 were caused by:

- Emissions of pollutants into the atmospheric air. In 2021, emissions from transport (512 thousand tons) were more than three times higher than emissions from manufacturing industries (155.9 thousand tons).
- Discharges of wastewater. According to the data from the state water cadastre, 1034.5 million cubic meters of wastewater were discharged into surface water bodies in 2020.
- Generation, processing, and burial of production and consumption waste. From 2017 to 2021, the annual amount of generated production waste increased by 12.14%.

Among the issues, experts also highlight the level of greening in urban areas. Most Belarusian cities, according to national standards, have achieved a greening level above 40%, while the accessibility of green zones remains relatively low.

Why should Belarusian cities become greener?

1. Air, water, and soil pollution **negatively affect the environment** and the quality of life in the city, exerting a negative impact on the health of urban residents.
2. Outdated infrastructure and low utilization of green technologies and approaches in urban infrastructure management **increase the burden on the budgets of Belarusian cities** and households.
3. Belarusian cities lag behind European cities in the adoption and implementation of climate projects, making them more **vulnerable to climate-related risks** such as heatwaves, cold snaps, floods, droughts, and fires.
4. Implementing projects to modernize urban management and infrastructure will create **additional favorable conditions for generating new jobs and economic growth**.

The Ministry of Natural Resources annually compiles the Ecological Development Ranking of Belarusian Regions, which is largely based on the approach and methodology of green cities.

***What is a green city?** Green cities are those where development strategies and management systems are directed at reducing the impact on natural resources, preserving ecosystems and biodiversity, and enhancing resilience to climate risks.*

Through green technologies and advanced approaches to urban management, cities ensure their sustainability, infrastructure efficiency, and citizens' quality of life.

With green technologies and advanced management approaches, cities ensure their sustainability, infrastructure efficiency and improved living standards for citizens.

Belarusian cities have experience in implementing green city approaches through international projects. With EU support, 56 cities have become participants in the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. Minsk participated in the EBRD's "Green Cities" program, and around 20 other cities were part of the GEF project "[Support for Green Urban Planning in Small and Medium Cities in Belarus.](#)" Unfortunately, after 2020, international projects related to green cities in Belarus have been discontinued, and cooperation with the EU, EBRD, GEF, and UNDP has practically ceased.

Benefits for Belarusians

Clean air and water, more recreational spaces – these improvements will enhance the health and quality of life for urban residents. The city will become safer and more comfortable for living through changes in transportation infrastructure and urban planning.

Green jobs will be created in energy, construction, manufacturing, services, waste management, urban planning, greening, landscaping, management, and education.



How to Make Belarusian Cities Green?

Urban development policies should be based on the principles of a green city and should be developed and implemented collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders.

Objectives	Practical Implementation
1. Develop the potential of cities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote green city approaches - Enhance the quality of urban governance - Ensure investment efficiency - Foster international collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reform local self-governance with green development in mind - Integrate green city approaches into urban planning, city strategies, and sectoral plans - Align city strategies with energy, water, transportation, and industrial policies - Enhance the skills of city authorities and enterprises - Provide technical support to urban authorities and communal organizations for implementing green development projects - Establish a Green Bank to accumulate international financing and implement green projects in cities - Engage in international initiatives such as Green Cities, Global Covenant of Mayors, Cities for Biodiversity, etc.
2. Invest in green infrastructure	
Replacing fossil fuels with clean energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy sources (RES) in cities: solar and wind power stations, solar collectors, heat pumps - Adopt city standards for procuring energy from RES - Establish energy cooperatives involving city residents
Creating a sustainable mobility system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop plans for sustainable urban mobility - Modernize public transportation - Utilize more eco-friendly transportation and fuels - Foster micro-mobility: scooters, bicycles, pedestrian zones
Developing green industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish eco-industrial parks - Attract investments for implementing green technologies - Support circular business models
Creating an efficient waste management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement waste prevention approaches - Develop a system for waste sorting by the population - Develop systems for reuse and recycling of waste
Enhancing resource efficiency of buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renovate buildings to improve energy efficiency - Introduce energy passports for buildings - Set green standards for new construction
Improving water resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upgrade water supply stations and sewage systems - Develop blue infrastructure objects in cities
Modern urban planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement norms for green urban planning - Expand the area, diversity, and accessibility of green areas - Develop smart networks in transportation, energy, lighting, etc.
Climate adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop climate adaptation plans - Increase urban green spaces and water bodies - Establish a support system for vulnerable groups
Healthy food environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize farmers' markets, urban gardens, and orchards - Promote changes in dietary habits, compost food waste

Sources of Reform Financing

Possible sources of financing include national and local budgets, loans from international financial organizations (World Bank, EBRD, EIB), technical assistance programs (GEF, UNDP, EU), and corporate investments.

