



ECOHOME

ANNUAL REPORT

2022



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INTRODUCTION

Our last yearly report introduction began with the phrase "This year was not easy." We don't want to repeat ourselves, but so it goes! Fortunately, it is not just the difficult life experience that repeats itself, but also the fact that Ecohome continues to work no matter what.

- Despite the fact that this year, the Belarusian KGB decided to declare us an extremist formation because we protect the rights of Belarusians to a healthy environment;
- despite the fact that Belarus withdrew from the Aarhus Convention, leaving Belarusians even more defenceless in exercising their environmental rights;
- despite the fact that the war has been ongoing for a whole year, and our country has been involved in it against the will of its people;
- despite the fact that the Belarusian environmental community is scattered all over the world in political exile, and we have to work from different countries and time zones;
- and much more.

These are circumstances which we have to adapt to while continuing to do everything in our power. What are the results of Ecohome's work this year? The next pages will tell you about it.

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

WHO ARE WE?

Until August 2021, Ecohome was a legal entity. We were founded in 1996 to promote an environmentally friendly lifestyle and the ideas of sustainable development. Ecohome was one of the oldest non-profit environmental organisations in Belarus. The establishment of Ecohome was initiated by a group of enthusiasts, activists, and dreamers who shared a commitment to environmental principles and wanted to share their ideas with others.

OUR MISSION

Ecohome, based on the principles of democracy and sustainable development, creates harmonious internal and external relations with like-minded people at home, in the country, in the world, in the universe.

WHAT DO WE DO AND WHY?

Ecohome is looking for a balance between nature and civilisation. We want to get closer to understanding the world and our place in it. In our work, we keenly cooperate with public environmental (and other) organisations, international structures, initiatives, and activists.



OUR FOCUS AREAS



LEGAL SERVICE AND
INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES



UWEC: ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSEQUENCES
OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE



SUSTAINABLE ENERGY
AND THE ANTI-NUCLEAR
CAMPAIGN



GREEN BELARUS



SOLVING ENVIRONMENTAL
ISSUES IN BELARUS



PROMOTION
OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

OUR 26-YEAR HISTORY

1991

- Ecohome environmental initiative was created based on the Next Stop – New Life youth national organisation. In 1996, Ecohome was registered as a public association.

1996

- Our team conducted the first international course on permaculture in Belarus¹.

2000

- Ecohome initiated the first forum of environmental NGOs.

2001

- Ecohome started working on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention ratified by Belarus. The Aarhus Convention – the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. The long-term Ecohome's engagement with the convention made it possible to improve the legislation on public participation in environmental decision-making and access to environmental information, as well as the applicable case law in Belarus.

¹ Permaculture is a type of green design that helps to grow food, build homes and create communities with minimal environmental impact.

2006

- Ecohome launches anti-nuclear activities responding to the plan of the nuclear power plant construction in Ostrovets (Grodno region). In 2008, we initiated the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign (BANC). Campaigners held debates and round-table discussions with scientists and carried out the first public environmental impact audit in Belarus;
- Ecohome initiated the establishment of the Green Network – an association of environmental organisations.

2008

- The NGO became an active member of the "Chernobyl Way" organising committee – the annual march dedicated to the Chernobyl accident anniversary.

2010

- Ecohome filed a lawsuit to the Ostrovets City Court demanding to provide information for public evaluation of the Belarusian NPP. This case became the first in the development of [judicial remedies to protect environmental rights in Belarus](#);
- the first public environmental expert review (of the nuclear power plant construction project) was carried out in Belarus.

2011

- A campaign was launched to protect the 40th October Revolution Anniversary Park in the centre of Minsk, in which locals, Ecohome and the Green Network took an active part. The administration of the city and the developer had planned to cut down a part of the park and construct a hotel for the World Hockey Championship in 2014. The trees could not be defended and the newly-built hotel was named Peking. However, the case was resonant and increased people's interest in the problem of development and destroying landscaped areas.

2014

- Ecohome sent a Communication on Harassment of Anti-Nuclear Activists to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee. It was this case that initiated the Aarhus Convention Rapid Response Mechanism in cases of harassment of environmental activists. One of the counts was the detention of Irina Sukhiy, Tatiana Novikova and Andrey Ozharovsky. They were going to hand over an open appeal to the Russian Embassy in Minsk to protest the signing of the framework contract for the NPP construction in Belarus;
- Ecohome helped residents to win the case for the relocation of a pig farm planned for construction near the village of Moysichi (three kilometres from Molodechno), which exemplified the importance of public participation.



2016

- Ecohome starts offering consultation to Minsk residents who live in the vicinity of the Kotovka pocket park. The park was to be partially cut down to make room for new a Catholic church. The locals and activists opposed that plan and even had to stay on 24-hour duty in the park. In the end, the construction was moved to another site. This high-profile and complicated case highlighted why development projects should be discussed at an early stage;
- saw the launch of the Green Line – a hotline to address environmental issues. The idea of the service was to give people advice and tools to solve environmental problems on their own, rather than provide ready-made solutions.

2017

- Ostrovets of Culture exhibition was organised, in which artists, environmentalists and architects presented their vision of the future fate of the unfinished nuclear power plant in Ostrovets. They appropriated the body of the Ostrovets NPP and created the possibility of another future.

2018

- Our team prepared a Scenario of Energy [R]Evolution in Belarus: Transition to 100% Renewable Energy in the Country.

2021

- Ecohome, the oldest environmental organisation in Belarus, marked its 25th anniversary;
- Ecohome public association was closed down by the decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus. Before the closing down, searches were conducted in the homes of Iryna Sukhiy, the organisation's Board member, and Maryna Dubina, the NGO's director. The Ministry of Information restricted access to Ecohome's old website ecohome-ngo.by;
- at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, closing down of Ecohome was qualified as persecution and harassment of environmental NGOs. Belarus was recommended to reinstate Ecohome.

2022

- Belarus has officially withdrawn from the Aarhus Convention;
- Ecohome was recognised as an "extremist formation";
- Ecohome became one of the movers of the UWEC international initiative in response to the war in Ukraine.

LEGAL SERVICE AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

AIM AND DESCRIPTION

It is important for us that everyone can exercise their right to a favourable environment, have the tools to participate in environmental decision-making, receive up-to-date information about the state of the environment, and have the opportunity to protect their rights. Over time, our legal service has processed over 700 cases all around Belarus and more than 60 court cases. We also analyse changes in legislation on environmental protection and prepare analytical reports on public participation in environmental decision-making and access to information.

Monitoring of repression in the environmental sector and bank watching

During the year, our legal service monitored cases of pressure and persecution against environmentalists and environmental NGOs, and on May 21 joined the Day of the Political Prisoners in Belarus announced by the Viasna Human Rights Center, and [repeatedly](#) told about [imprisoned environmental activists](#) on the Ecohome website and social media.





As of March 2023, the following people are incarcerated:

- [Viktar Fianchuk](#)
- [Aliaksandr Bialou](#)
- [Stsiapan Latypau](#)
- [Pavel Nazdra](#)
- [Yauhen Rubashka](#)
- [Artsiom Salavei](#)
- [Andrei Kuznechyk](#)
- [Yauhen Merkis](#)

But there was also good news: on December 17, environmental activists [Siarhei Piatrukhin](#) and [Aliaksandr Kabanau](#) were released, having fully served their time.

According to Lawtrend monitoring data collected from open sources, 76 environmental organisations or NGOs that incorporate an environmental component of their activities have been shut down since the beginning of 2020, and 40 environmental organisations have decided to dissolve themselves.

In addition, we looked at how the events following August 2020 in Belarus affected the financing of projects by various banks. Thus, the World Bank has not officially commented on the situation or announced any position regarding Belarus, while the EBRD has stopped investing in new projects involving the state since the beginning of 2020 and does not plan to resume the investments in the foreseeable future. Read more [in this article](#).

Withdrawal from the Aarhus Convention

Since 1 February 2022, Belarus has been restricted in special rights and privileges under the Aarhus Convention. Such a decision was made at the 7th Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention on 21 October 2021, which ordered Belarus to restore the registration of Ecohome, but this never happened. The fact of shutting down the organisation was recognised at the UNECE level as a form of persecution of environmental NGOs for their activities.

On 12 March, we received a [response to our supervisory appeal](#) from the Supreme Court: we were refused to protest the decision to liquidate Ecohome.

On 23-24 June, an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention was held in Geneva, where for the first time in history a [Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders](#) was appointed - Michel Forst. This mechanism was created, among other things, due to the efforts of Ecohome. Their purpose is to respond quickly in cases of persecution and pressure on environmental activists since such cases are a significant violation of the provisions of the Convention and require an immediate response, which seems impossible if the case is considered in a general manner.

A round-table discussion dedicated to the problem of persecution of environmental activists was also held at the Meeting of the Parties, where the situation with environmentalists and environmental NGOs in Belarus was also presented.

A month later, on 18 July, it became known that Lukashenka signed a decree on the withdrawal of the Republic of Belarus from the parties to the Aarhus Convention. UN human rights experts [condemned](#) the decision. The European ECO Forum

members issued a joint [statement](#) on Belarus' withdrawal from the Aarhus Convention, in which they called such a decision inexcusable and noted that they would continue to closely monitor the situation with the implementation of the environmental rights of Belarusian nationals and supported the [position of Ecohome](#).

On 24 October, Belarus officially ceased to be a party to the Aarhus Convention.

On 23 November, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the ongoing repressions against the democratic opposition and civil society in Belarus

It [condemned the withdrawal of Belarus from the Aarhus Convention](#), in particular in the context of the launch of the Astravets NPP without fully implementing the stress test recommendations, and lamented further negligence regarding compliance with the strictest nuclear safety rules at the NPP site; the European Parliament also condemned the brutal persecution by the Belarusian regime of environmental and human rights defenders, as well as NGOs raising nuclear safety issues, such as Ecohome.

On this occasion, Special Rapporteur Michel Forst stated:

“

«As Belarus' withdrawal from the #Aarhus Convention takes effect at midnight tonight. I'm very much thinking of all environmental defenders who are still at risk. I call on my colleagues to continue to pay attention to the needs of environmental defenders in Belarus. Given its stated commitment to uphold Aarhus' provisions after withdrawal, the Belarusian MFA should take concrete measures to secure effective access to information, public participation and justice. This includes ensuring a safe and enabling environment for environmental defenders»

”

 Michel Forst 
@ForstMichel

As #Belarus' withdrawal from the #Aarhus Convention takes effect at midnight tonight, I'm very much thinking of all environmental defenders who are still at risk. I call on my colleagues @un_SPEXPERTS to continue to pay attention to the needs of environmental defenders in Belarus.

11:58 PM · 23 okt. 2022 г.

 Michel Forst 
@ForstMichel

Given its stated commitment to uphold Aarhus' provisions after withdrawal, @BelarusMFA should take concrete measures to secure effective access to information, public participation and justice. This includes ensuring a safe and enabling environment for environmental defenders.

12:33 AM · 24 okt. 2022 г.

Ecohome believes that Belarus will become a free democratic country that cares about the rights and interests of its citizens and ensures an environmental democracy. Our country should return to the family of the Aarhus Convention not only in words but also in deeds!

Analytical work

The Ecohome legal service was also engaged in analytical work. We took part in the preparation of a [Civic Review of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) in Belarus](#), initiated by the Office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and representatives of civil society. Ecohome experts have prepared an overview of SDGs 16 and 7: The right to a favourable environment and Affordable and sustainable energy. The reviews present trends since 2016.

Maryna Dubina has prepared a review “Environmental NGOs in 2015-2020: trends and achievements that are important to record” for the collection of articles [Belarusian Civil Society 2015-2021: from Steady Development to New Challenges](#).

On 5-7 October, the 9th Environment for Europe [Ministerial Conference was completed in Nicosia \(Republic of Cyprus\)](#). The conference gathered some 1,000 participants, about 70 delegations from different countries represented at the ministerial level, as well as representatives of European and international organisations, experts, and NGOs. The Minister of Environment of Belarus was not invited to the conference. But on 6 October, during the Ministerial Conference’s event on SEA in transportation, the E40 waterway SEA results prepared by Ecohome were presented.

Education, public hearings and participation in international organisations

Throughout the year, the legal service has been monitoring public hearings and explaining to the population [how to get involved](#). We also talked about future changes in the procedure of public hearings on urban planning and architectural projects. Spoiler: [easier for officials, more difficult for the public](#).

We have prepared a series of reports on practices and aspects of animal protection-related environmental legislation: we [looked at mechanisms of stray animal rights protection in Belarus](#) and [whether cruel treatment of animals can be prevented](#).

Moreover, we participated in many educational activities. For example, Maryna Dubina and Iryna Sukhiy spoke at the [Belarus Urban Fellowship-2022](#) educational course by the Centre for New Ideas with a presentation “Make Belarusian Cities Green Again: Ways to Improve the Environment in the Regions.” The participants discussed what can be done under present conditions in terms of developing Belarusian cities, how to keep them green and how to influence urban planning decisions. In another series of lectures, they touched upon the public hearings procedure, and successful cases of public participation, and ways citizens can influence urban planning policy to make Belarusian cities comfortable.

Ecohome is also a member of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, and Iryna Sukhiy currently co-chairs the Forum’s steering committee. At the Forum



Human Rights Foundation
@HRF

1/ HRF welcomes the decision by @Europarl_EN condemning “the Belarusian regime’s brutal persecution of environmental NGOs ... notably the Ecohome NGO.” buff.ly/3unj6EJ

9:50 PM · 1 дек. 2022 г.

conference held in Prague on 5-6 December 2022, Iryna presented the Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Work Group on a panel dedicated to the environmental impact of the war in Ukraine. Iryna also had the honour of presenting the EaP CSF Civil Society Award 2022 to the courageous Ukrainian civil society representatives.

New legal status

On 17 October 2022, the KGB ruled to declare Ecohome an extremist formation. Ecohome's Telegram channel and chat room were added to the Republican List of Extremist Resources.



We have not stopped our activities, despite searches, detentions of our members and politically motivated liquidation of the organisation in 2021. We will not stop now either. We regret that the "recognition" of civil society organisations' efforts in Belarus is earned in such a perverse way and we continue to work for a new and green Belarus.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND ANTI-NUCLEAR CAMPAIGN

AIM AND DESCRIPTION

The campaign is mainly focused on nuclear-free development and the transition of Belarus and its neighbouring states to sustainable energy. We have been monitoring and providing independent expert opinions on the construction of the Belarusian NPP since 2009 and informing the international community about known violations.

In April 2022, Ecohome hosted Chernobyl Week, an event filled with activities to raise awareness of the Chernobyl accident impact that is still in place, to highlight the horrific new challenges that have emerged since February 24 and the weaponization of the nuclear power plant, and to offer an anti-nuclear alternative. Most of the events were held online to allow the participation of Belarusians (and other nationals) who had to leave the country. Read more about the activities in the section on promoting environmental issues.

However, we would like to highlight two public discussions: "[Chernobyl Again – New Radiation Threats and Risks. What Is There To Be Done?](#)", where, among other things, the question of personal safety in a nuclear accident was raised, as well as "Chernobyl-2022: How Did it Happen and How Should Approaches to Nuclear Safety Change?". Both events were co-organised with the Oxford Observatory for Belarus and streamed on the YouTube channel of the Research Centre under Sviatlana



Tsikhanouskaya's Office. A special issue-related live stream dedicated to the Chernobyl accident anniversary, which we did together with Malanka Media, is also available online.

A [Resolution](#) was adopted at the Chernobyl March in Vilnius.

““

"The lessons of Chernobyl have not been learned, otherwise the European Union would not have sought to declare nuclear power 'green' and Russia would not have attacked nuclear power plants in Ukraine, taken their personnel hostage and threatened the world with a new Chernobyl",

””

reads the Resolution.

At the beginning of May, a report was published on the activities of the ["Overdose" project](#) initiated by Ecohome. The project involves the popular monitoring of territories contaminated as a result of the Chernobyl accident. The monitoring continues and anyone can take part in it. We have also prepared a short [guide on radiation monitors](#) that we use in our work within the "Overdose" project.

Moreover, we joined our international partners to prepare the online discussion "Challenging Germany's Gas Supply System in the Context of War in Ukraine". The discussion focused on how to effectively diversify supplies and what a realistic timeframe is for phasing out Russian gas

in the European market, as well as how to accelerate the energy transition and decarbonisation to strengthen energy security in both Ukraine and the EU. A recording of the discussion in English is available [here](#).

In October, having come across a petition demanding nuclear waste disposal outside Belarus, which appeared concurrently with the hearings organised by the Emergencies Ministry on the draft Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus "On Approval of the Strategy for Radioactive Waste Management", we explained [who is responsible for the storage of spent fuel from the Belarusian NPP](#). Spoiler alert: Under international agreements, radioactive waste must be kept in the same country as its source.

““

"We see it as a clear signal that Belarusian citizens do not trust the government in terms of the future storage sites' safety, and Ecohome seconds them",

says Irina Sukhiy, Ecohome representative and activist of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign.

"The safety of our radioactive waste storage facility, for the disposal of which we are responsible, depends on the regime that will build and operate it".

””

SOLVING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN BELARUS

AIM AND DESCRIPTION

Ecohome helps people solve local environmental issues through free consultations and providing action algorithms, templates of petitions to state agencies and other information and expert support.

In 2022, we were contacted 150 times.

CONSULTATION-RELATED STATISTICS:



Minsk and Minsk region:
90 enquiries



Hrodna and Hrodna Region:
1 enquiry



Brest and Brest Region:
15 enquiries



Homel and Homel Region:
7 enquiries



Mahilou and Mahilou Region:
5 enquiries



Vitsebsk and Vitsebsk Region:
8 enquiries



Location unknown:
20 enquiries



Russia:
2 enquiries



Lithuania:
2 enquiries



ISSUES:



Green spaces:
66 enquiries



Legislation/Environmental Impact Reports/Public hearings/Public and environmental assessments/Protected areas/City planning:
16 enquiries



Landscaping:
4 enquiries



Air pollution:
5 enquiries



Information requests:
20 enquiries



Waste management:
19 enquiries



Animals/Birds:
9 enquiries



Water/Water bodies:
8 enquiries



Noise pollution:
3 enquiries

GENDER:



Women: **110** enquiries;

Men: **38** enquiries;

Not specified: **2** enquiries

Last year, we added [eight new algorithms](#) to the Ecohome website that help solve environmental issues. These include two algorithms explaining the steps to make if you spot a dry vegetation (grassland) fire or see someone burning dry vegetation. Two others addressed the issue of bonfires: rules for making bonfires in the forest and measures to take when seeing someone making a fire in a forbidden place and/or violating fire safety requirements. Two more

algorithms explain how to collect tree sap in the spring and what to do if you witness a violation of these rules. The website has also been updated with an algorithm of what to do when your neighbours throw their rubbish into the small rubbish bin at the house entrance, as well as how to dispose of potted Christmas trees after the New Year holidays.

Users can access appropriate action plans by exploring a special section of our site.

Petition and enquiry templates are also available for download there.

The Ecohome has contributed to raising the following environmental issues by the media in Belarus:

- **Can the cattle burial ground contaminate the water in the Vitsebsk District?**

[According to our sources](#), there are plans to set up a COVID-19 vaccine production shop on the premises of BelVitUniFarm enterprise (Vitsebsk Region). We read the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report and were concerned that the cattle burial ground bordering the production site for the new vaccine development facility might negatively affect local water resources. In violation of environmental and sanitary standards, the cattle burial ground is located within the Dolzha Lake water protection zone and the sanitary protection zone of the underground source of drinking water supply (artesian borehole). The borehole supplies water to the entire village of Dolzha and to BelVitUniFarm itself.

The independent media drew public attention to the issue, and the officials promised to carry out an inspection.

- **A bypass road to relieve vehicular traffic is to be built in Homel.**

Having studied the construction's EIA report, Ecohome noticed that the forest along the Charnihau Highway conceals mass-casualty burials of soldiers who defended Homel in 1941, as well as two mass graves of 1937 Stalinist repression victims. A

side letter from Belniipgradostroitelstvo recommended that the highway be routed to a different location to avoid disturbing the graves. However, officials later claimed it to be a mistake, and the media who disseminated this information were prosecuted for allegedly "rehabilitating Nazism". Following media reports, the EIA report was removed from the website of the local Municipal Construction Directorate. However, withholding such information is a violation of the law, as is posting a new, "corrected" report that might follow. Ecohome urged Homel residents to file a complaint with the prosecutor's office.

- **Bitumen concrete plant in Brest: what's wrong with it?**

A bitumen concrete plant is going to be built on Hazdzetskaha Street in Brest. We filed 21 comments and suggestions on the EIA report with the officials. The dispersion calculation data analysis shows that the plant simply cannot be built in the area in question without amending the project documentation concerning reducing pollutant emissions.



UWEC: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

AIM AND DESCRIPTION

On 24 February, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In light of that, Ecohome [supported](#) the Belarusian Anti-War Movement Manifesto and signed an [open letter by the environmental community](#) demanding to end the war, a [statement of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee](#) on the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian armed forces, and a [statement by Belarusians](#) protesting the involvement of Belarus in the war with Ukraine. Moreover, Ecohome and Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign representatives, among other environmental and human rights activists, [addressed the UN](#) demanding an emergency session of the General Assembly on Ukraine:

“

"We urge you to raise at the General Assembly and effectively address the issue of protecting the people of Ukraine from the use of weapons of mass destruction, including through aerial attacks, and specifically the issue of protecting Ukrainian nuclear power plants from air strikes",

the statement said.

”



[The UWEC international initiative was set up](#) to study the impact of military action on the environment, with Ecohome being one of the movers.

UWEC stands for Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Work Group. It includes independent Belarusian experts. As an association of environmentalists, journalists, experts and activists, it aims to exchange verified information and seek joint solutions to environmental problems resulting from the war.

The UWEC team needs to ensure that environmental laws are not eased during wartime, as the long-term consequences will be tragic. The main focus is to disseminate information to an English-speaking audience, but the group's [website](#)

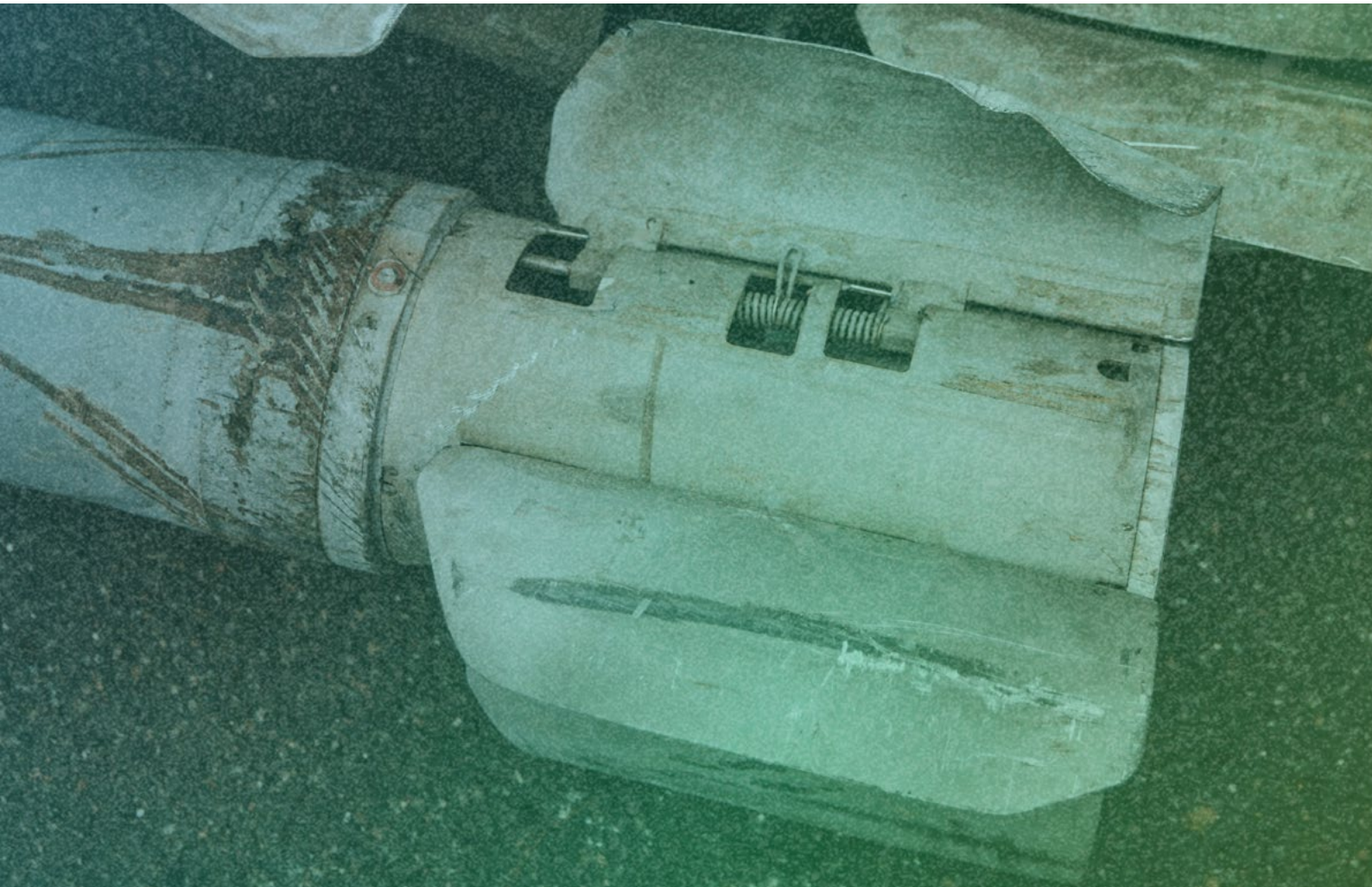
also publishes content in Ukrainian and Russian. The group also tries to make sure that after the victory, Ukraine is rebuilt according to green standards of sustainable development.

“

"Our work consists of three steps: monitoring the situation and collecting data, verifying them and organising independent expert review, and, finally, disseminating verified information about the local and global effects of the war",

explains Iryna Sukhiy.

”



GREEN BELARUS: DEVELOPING A GREEN VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF BELARUS

AIM AND DESCRIPTION

In 2022, Ecohome, together with other environmental organisations, initiatives and experts, began developing a vision for a Green Belarus.

In 2022, Ecohome, together with other environmental organisations, initiatives and experts, began developing a vision for a Green Belarus.


Extreme climate change, inequality, war, racism, poverty, hunger, depletion of natural resources, pollution, energy security issues, an era of authoritarian tendencies, a crisis of democracy, a demographic and environmental crisis - all these problems confront humanity regardless of national borders.

No country could overcome all these issues alone, stand apart from them and avoid their impact: that is simply impossible.

But we believe that these problems can be fundamentally overcome and a more just world is possible. A world built on the principles of environmental wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, non-violence, sustainability and respect for diversity.



Ecohome and our colleagues believe in the possibility of building a Green Belarus as part of a shared world based on the following principles:

-  Climate neutrality
-  Resource efficiency
-  Circularity
-  Justice
-  Sustainability
-  Environmental friendliness
-  Good governance

Green Belarus' vision sectors currently include energy, industry, transport, agriculture, waste management and prevention, biodiversity and natural area management, urban and rural development, as well as education and strengthening the human and humane potential of Belarusians.

“

"Protected areas cover a large part of the country's territory and encompass all unique ecosystems, thus ensuring the conservation of biodiversity. At the same time, they are available for recreation and green tourism, which allows such areas to become places of economic and cultural value. The use of the areas for economic activities is aimed at sustainability and minimising the impact on natural processes",

reads an extract from the Green Vision. ”

Work on the Green Vision development is ongoing and is to be discussed with other stakeholders in 2023.






PROMOTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

AIM AND DESCRIPTION

It is important for us to communicate the topics we are working on in a clear and inspiring way and to encourage a shared concern for environmental issues. We want as many Belarusians as possible to be aware of their responsibility for the common future and to understand that a favourable environment is a human right, and it is important to know how to exercise it. To this end, we are active on social media and create content for our website and independent media outlets, engage in collaborations with various communities and influencers, organise awareness-raising events and employ new methods to promote environmental issues.

IN 2022 WE:

-  Made a grand-scale Chernobyl Week campaign
-  Organised an online exhibition in a virtual 3D space
-  Created 159 texts on the Ecohome website and published numerous posts on social media
-  Organised 10+ collaborations with communities and influencers
-  Worked extensively with independent media



Chornobyl Week 2022 initiated by Ecohome addressed the weaponization of nuclear power plants in Ukraine. Events were organised in Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Georgia, Germany, the USA and other countries. For the Week, Ecohome initiated a flashmob among writers inviting them to share their reflections on the "atom for peace". A sports challenge was announced by independent Belarusian sportsmen, and public discussions took place at the CIS and EU levels with the support of the Research Centre under Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's Office and the Oxford Observatory for Belarus. We also organised a live broadcast on one of the largest Belarusian YouTube channels "Malanka Media". Another video was created by the author's project "Around Culture" and was dedicated to the influence of the Chornobyl accident on art. Belarusians from diasporas around the world were offered multiple participation opportunities. The week ended with the traditional Chornobyl March that gathered 200+ participants in Vilnius; protest actions were also held in other cities around the world. Over 95 reports about Chornobyl Week and Ecohome appeared in the media.

Within Chornobyl Week, together with curator Ksenia Tyrsikova, Ecohome also organised the **SUNFLOWER online exhibition** in an unusual 3D space, combining environmental and anti-war messages related to the war in Ukraine. Two dozen Belarusian artists took part in the exhibition.

Over the year, our social media grew by 585 followers, even though Ecohome had been "awarded" the status of an extremist formation. In December alone, our post reach amounted to over 28,000 users! The Ecohome website was visited by 32% more people than in 2021 – 21,000 users in total! The media mentioned us 395 times. We are very grateful to our audience and the media for their trust and concern for environmental issues.

In September 2022, with the help of

independent sociologists, we conducted a sociological survey among the Belarusian population to find out the current social attitude to environmental issues, understanding and relevance thereof, communication channels, as well as the willingness of citizens to take part in solving these problems.

Having analysed the responses of 1,066 Belarusian urban residents aged from 18 to 64 collected through an online survey, we found that:



1 in 5 respondents is very interested in getting informed on environmental issues;



Women are more concerned about environmental problems **than men** (58% vs. 42%), and the age group showing the biggest interest in environmental issues is 45-54 years old;



Global environmental problems, such as climate change and pollution, are most often cited as **important**.

Why is that? It is a matter of poor awareness of the manifestations of global problems at the local level and of local environmental issues. For example, almost 40% of survey participants are not aware of the real construction and operation status of the Belarusian NPP, although, judging by their responses, radioactive pollution is one of the topics of concern to Belarusians. At the same time, the share of those opposed to the launch of the plant is 45%, which is higher than the number of supporters of its operation.

These findings will help us adjust our current activities and better respond to the needs of people inside the country. You can read an [abridged text of the survey findings on our website](#).

WHAT'S NEXT?

Ecohome keeps up the good work, planning collaborations with media and influencers, and looking for new formats. We are also working on updating our website to make it more accessible and user-friendly.

- At the beginning of 2023, an Ecohome representative became a member of Belarus' Coordination Committee. We believe there can be no true democratic change without incorporating environmental values, and we consider it important to promote the environmental agenda among the united democratic forces in Belarus.
- We are already working on the Chernobyl Week 2023 program, and actions for the Day of Political Prisoners, and continue to advise people on environmental issues and maintain the concern of the media, Belarusian population and international decision-makers for environmental rights and the environmental consequences of the war in Ukraine.
- In 2023, we will keep promoting the well-being of Belarusians and the preservation of the environment. We believe that at some point, we will return to the country based on law, to the new Belarus, where the value of human and environmental rights is not an empty phrase. And we will do our best to bring that moment closer.

**You can find out more about
our activities on our website
and social media:**

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