



A Roadmap for SDG Implementation in the Republic of Belarus

Executive summary



February 2017

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Context

The Republic of Belarus has made significant progress in its sustainable development since its independence. Ranked 52nd among 187 countries in the Human Development Report 2016, Belarus has joined the list of upper-middle income countries. It had a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of USD 15,629 in 2015 which is higher than the level of GNI per capita in the high human development category of countries (USD 13,231).¹ A landlocked country situated between the European Union states of Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, and Ukraine and the Russian Federation, Belarus has a fortuitous geographic and important geopolitical location, and is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU).

For its efforts from 2000 to 2015, Belarus has been acknowledged as a regional leader in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Belarus fully



Belarus is a landlocked country with rich natural resources. (Photo: UNDP Belarus / Dmitry Lasko)

implemented the MDG 1 target to reduce, by more than three times, the share of population living below the national poverty line by 2009: in 2000, over 40% of the population were living below the poverty line, while in 2009, the share of individuals dropped to 5.4%.² Despite specific challenges, including the substantial impact of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986 and its aftermath effects, the country has continually invested in a relatively prosperous and well managed education, health, and other social service infrastructure and enjoyed almost full employment. This has

¹ [UNDP Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone.](#)

² Institute of Economic Research under the Ministry of Belarus: [Status of Achieving the Millennium Development Goals](#), 2010.

paid off in levels of education, labour market skills and gender equality that compare favourably with many neighbouring countries.

With such successes to build on, Belarus has taken important steps to prepare for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), before and especially during 2017. These include: 1) the establishment of a high level, cross-ministerial institutional coordination mechanism led by an SDG Coordinator reporting to the President, and involving consultation with representatives of civil society, parliament and private sector; 2) presentation of the Voluntary National Review report at the High Level Political Forum; 3) organization of a parliamentary hearing on the SDGs which resulted in the issuance of a comprehensive Declaration; and 5) widescale public awareness raising and communication campaigns, conducted with the support of the United Nations, which have ensured a high level of awareness of the SDGs among regional and local government, civil society, private sector and the public.³

The Republic of Belarus is also embarking on a review of its Development Strategy 2030 to formulate a new Sustainable Development Strategy 2035. This process, and the steps taken by the country to date, provide a strong foundation for the Republic of Belarus to move forward with an SDG Roadmap.

Agenda 2030 and the Roadmap

The Roadmap comes at a critical juncture for the Republic of Belarus. In contrast to many neighbouring countries, Belarus since 1992 has pursued a gradual transition from Soviet-type socialism towards a society where the state continues to play an important role, and the greater involvement of the private sector is also incentivized and facilitated. But with its post-2011 growth model increasingly at risk and requiring macroeconomic external adjustment, Belarus is facing the spectre of the middle-income country trap, reflecting difficulties in moving beyond growth based on the production and export of energy and raw materials (e.g., potash), foodstuffs, light industrial goods, and industrial machinery that is competitive mainly on slow-growing EaEU markets which are imperfectly integrated into global value chains. While these trends are placing strains on some of Belarus's most important social accomplishments, including low poverty, inequality, and unemployment rates, there is also deepening potential for a transformative sustainable growth trajectory.

The Roadmap takes as its point of departure the priorities of the Republic of Belarus towards an inclusive and sustainable growth model which leaves no one behind.⁴ It builds on the country's substantial successes, while recognizing the potential risks it faces, to identify platforms for the country to accelerate implementation of the SDGs. In addition, the Roadmap covers the alignment of the development strategy, policies

³ Campaigns [UN70 Express for SDGs](#) and [#InclusiveBelarus: Leaving No One Behind in Achieving the SDGs](#).

⁴ [National Strategy of Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus 2030](#).

and programmes with the SDGs, and the institutional coordination mechanism established to promote and oversee implementation. It further addresses financing and partnerships as well as monitoring and reporting of the SDGs. A series of SDG analytical tools were used as a basis for the Roadmap.⁵

The Roadmap also takes into account the principles underlying the 2030 Agenda – universality, indivisibility, leaving no one behind and human rights – and the overall legal and global context within which the Republic of Belarus is charting its sustainable development course. This involves the international instruments to which Belarus is a party, including, among others, the Paris Agreement, and international human rights, environmental and labour conventions and treaties. These commitments are reflected directly in the SDGs and their realization can help ensure progress made in reaching the SDGs is inclusive, both in terms of process and outcome.

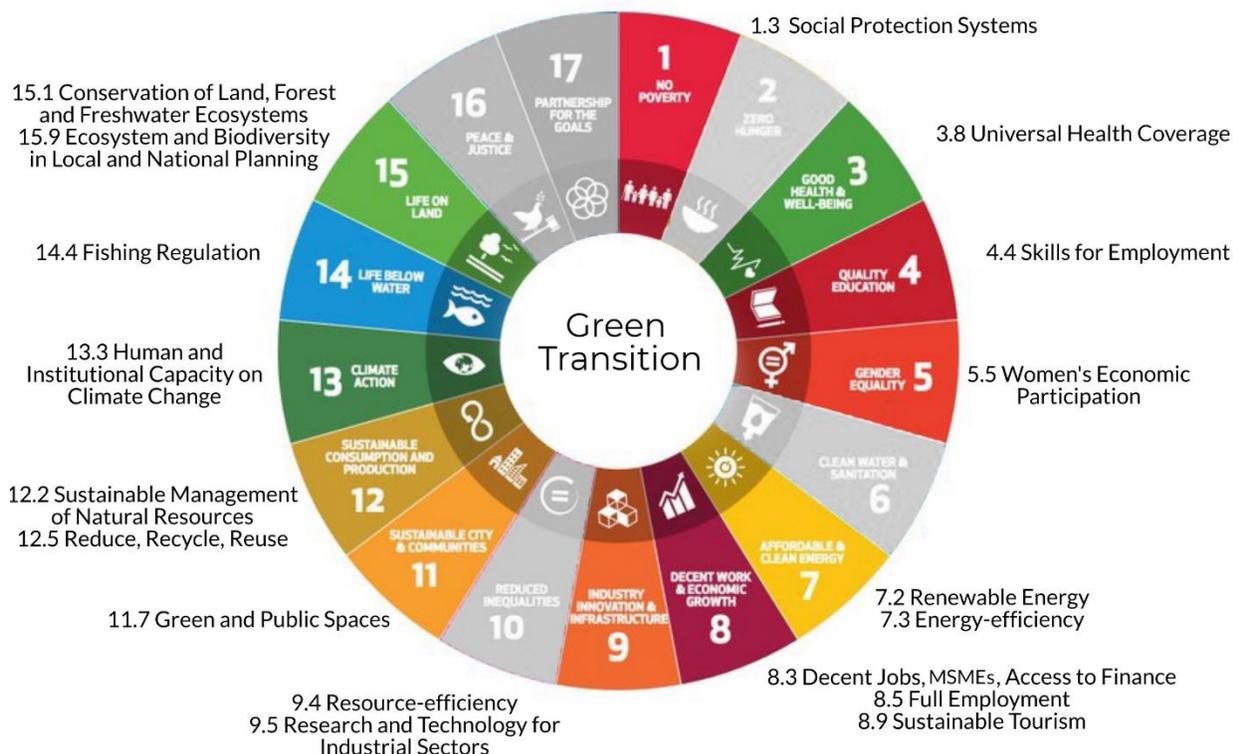
SDG Accelerator Platforms

The Roadmap identifies accelerator platforms that contain policy and programmatic directions which, if translated and implemented, can help remove bottlenecks (either systematic or underlying barriers) to development results in order to deliver transformative benefits across multiple SDGs. The accelerator platforms respond to the need to prioritize in the SDG context and thus, by their nature, are not intended to define all the areas of development that the country might pursue over the course of time until 2030.

The accelerator platforms are based on an equal (or at least proportionate) emphasis on the economic, social, and environmental dimensions and emphasize the linkages across these three dimensions in order to avoid siloed approaches, to identify win-win policy/programming opportunities that address multiple priorities, and to best manage trade-offs among them. They are firmly grounded in Belarusian success to date, reflecting especially the country's development priorities, government policy and programming frameworks, and its development narratives. The accelerator platforms are:

⁵ These are: The Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA), the SDG Dashboard, and the SDG complexity analysis which are annexed to the Roadmap.

Green transition for inclusive and sustainable growth



A green transition prioritizes progress towards a green economy coupled with a structural transformation which intensifies growth that is truly sustainable. A green economy is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. In the context of Belarus, greening needs to be married with efforts to ensure decent employment and modernization of the economy in order to reap the ultimate benefits of a sustainable growth pattern. A green transition prioritizes growth in the sustainable and low carbon sectors in which Belarus has notable advantages due to a highly educated population (i.e., human capital for ICT, health), compact and geographically well-located territory (i.e., transport), infrastructure, climate and recognized world heritage (i.e., tourism). Such a transition could place Belarus among the leading countries globally on the low carbon and future business areas of ICT and digitalization, education and health care, and green investments.

At the core of this transition lies competitive businesses that can produce more green jobs and decent employment in these productive sectors. Strengthened measures, building on recent positive steps, to promote an enabling environment for Mini, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly business development services and access to finance are fundamental. This also requires tax benefits, increased investment in research and development (R&D), and the active exploration of the public-private partnerships in key sectors. In some sectors, state owned enterprise plays an important role, which in order to enable growth, requires improved corporate governance systems. Sustainable procurement practices should be implemented in

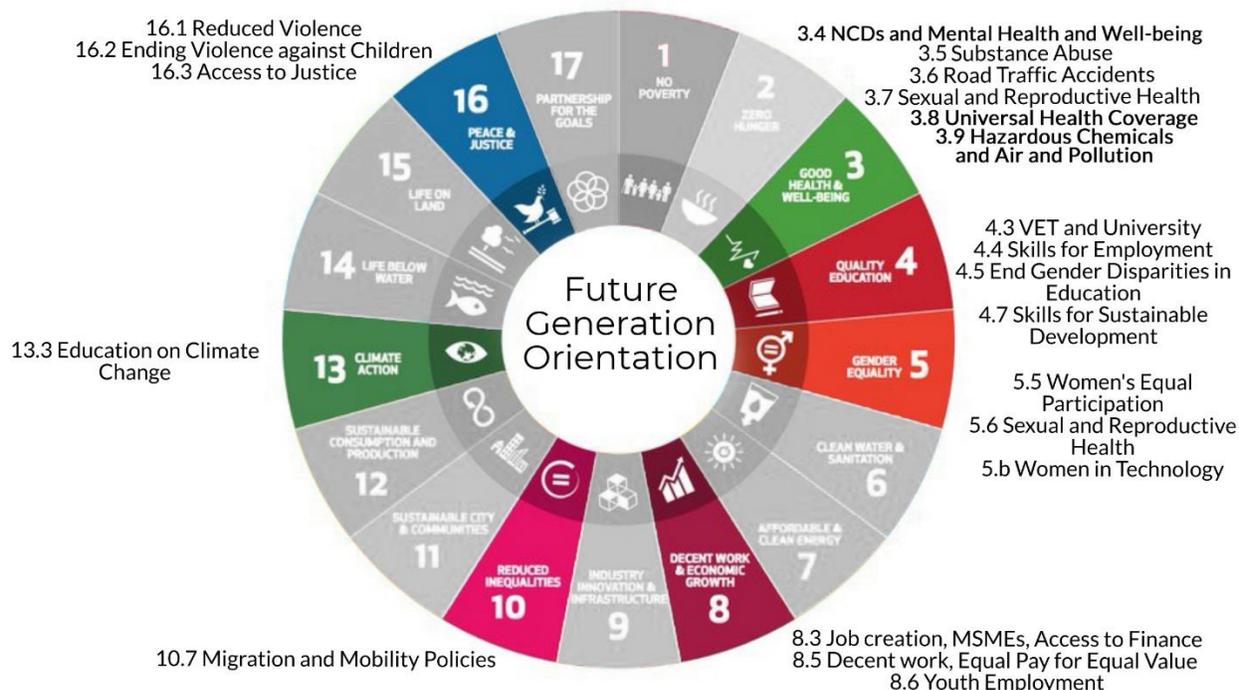
state and non-state entities linked to growth sectors (e.g. health). Such a transition also requires modification of the social protection system to move beyond instruments predicated on state employment to more inclusive models, such as unemployment insurance.

Cultivating sustainable growth sectors, including eco/agro-tourism, recreation and transport relies on boosting the conservation and sustainable management of Belarus' globally significant natural resources. Intensified policies and programmes are required to enhance protected areas management, including tourism infrastructure and ensuring appropriate marketing and promotion approaches for private and local eco/agro-businesses, as well as revenue-sharing mechanisms among local communities, businesses and the conservation sector; to improve the health of freshwater ecosystems; and to strengthen the management of the habitat of flagship species (e.g. European bison). A low carbon transition demands more investments in energy efficiency in buildings and industry; the promotion of renewable energy technologies and fuel efficiency, including electric vehicles and improved public transportation; modernization of waste management technologies; improved agricultural practices and high quality (organic) food production; and the enhancement of carbon sinks. This approach combines reducing emissions, in line with Belarus' nationally determined commitments under the Paris Accord,⁶ with investing in green businesses that provide for future employment and local and rural development.

Lessons from other countries indicate the state of Belarus needs to proactively shape market institutions to stimulate green manufacturing and production on the supply side and demand for consumption of green goods and services for a successful green transition. A strategic policy group and government think-tank to foresight economic and social changes interlinked with climate, energy and environment alterations, as is being tested in other countries, would provide informed policy advice for the government to lead the path of green transition with the active involvement of the society and the pivotal role of the private sector.

⁶ Belarus has committed to keep greenhouse gases in 2030 at 28% below 1990 levels, excluding land use and forestry. This would equate to a roughly 5% rise compared to current emissions.

Future generation orientation



A future generation orientation builds on Belarus' substantial successes with development outcomes in the first decade of life (e.g. reductions in infant and under five mortality rates, maternal mortality, universal primary education, universal health services) to tackle the trends putting those successes at risk during the second and third decades (adolescence and youth).⁷ It would orient public policy towards creating a future Belarus within which the young and future generations enjoy a range of opportunities to find decent and fulfilling work, healthy lifestyle choices and a meaningful voice in decisions that impact their lives. Evidence increasingly demonstrates the positive social and economic impact of investing in adolescents and young people to create citizens who can critically think, grasp opportunities, deal with an increasingly interconnected world, manage positively migration dynamics, and tackle economic, environmental and social complexities.

This platform involves putting in place policy and programmatic measures to address increasingly high levels of vulnerabilities among adolescents and youth, related to rising levels of substance dependencies (esp. alcohol, drugs and smoking) linked to non-communicable and communicable diseases, violence and other gender related norms, unsafe behaviours, mental disorders and stress especially among girls, and

⁷ Belarusian law defines youth up to 31 years old.

forms of institutionalization. Of particular concern is an insufficient level of enforcement of age related restrictions to tobacco and alcohol in Belarus.⁸

To address these trends, a combination of measures is required that improve access to sexual and reproductive health services and new educational approaches to sexuality and gender, strengthened adolescent and youth-friendly and gender-sensitive psycho-social services, particularly for at risk groups, as well as specific efforts to improve disability services and access to child-friendly justice. Scaling up good practice models (like Youth-Friendly-Health-Services centres)⁹ and implementing specific actions to enhance effective cooperation among community-based, civil society and government service providers are critical steps.

Key 'best buy' interventions (in particular reduction of youth access to psychoactive substances by raising excise taxation for tobacco and alcohol, implementing age- and time related restriction measures for retail sales of tobacco and alcohol, and promoting an indoor smoke-free policy) to better tackle growing threats of narcotic drugs, mental health issues, diabetes and the harmful use of alcohol and tobacco to the health and wellbeing of adolescents and youth would reinforce existing policies to strengthen the health sector.¹⁰ These should have secondary benefits for the health and safety of the overall population of Belarus, in particular in addressing the notable gender discrepancy in life expectancy (10.8 years), which remains overall below the European average and is mainly explained by prevalence in alcohol consumption and smoking among men.¹¹



Investing in adolescents and young people has a positive social and economic impact. (Photo: UNDP Belarus)

⁸ A survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Children's Fund on substance use by adolescents and youths in Belarus in 2016 revealed that 25% of 14–17-year-olds who had consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months were able to buy it in shops and 40% of adolescents aged 14–17 years were able to buy cigarettes in shops without being asked for their identity card. See UNICEF report entitled *Исследование по употреблению психоактивных веществ подростками и молодежью в Республике Беларусь [Study on the use of psychoactive substances by adolescents and youth in the Republic of Belarus, 2016]*.

⁹ Gotsadze, T. (2015), Assessment of Youth Friendly Health Services in the Republic of Belarus, UNICEF.

¹⁰ WHO Regional Office for Europe. [Noncommunicable Diseases. Factsheets on sustainable development goals: health targets.](#)

¹¹ Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are estimated to account for 89% of all deaths in Belarus (cardiovascular diseases 63% and cancers 14%). Life expectancy is 78,0 years for women and 66,5 years for men (2015). [WHO. Key Country Indicators.](#)

While getting ahead of negative trends, this platform also involves creating and enabling future-oriented opportunities for adolescents and youth to fulfil their potential and return to or remain in Belarus. This includes greater investment in improved vocational, educational and technical training programmes, particularly in critical thinking and emerging demand skill sets (e.g. ICT, green jobs). Specific policies and strengthened labour market institutions capacities would explicitly target young job seekers/unemployed, school graduates and other vulnerable groups of adolescents and youth (not in employment, education and training - NEET group) in order to support smooth school-to-work transition and decent working conditions for young people. Investments are required in specific programmes to increase girls' financial and digital literacy, access to opportunities in technology and innovation, and education in Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) subjects.¹² New models for the future of work, including self-employment, the sharing and gig economies, social entrepreneurship and start-ups – often linked to digitalization, new technologies and innovation – require proactive exploration and study.

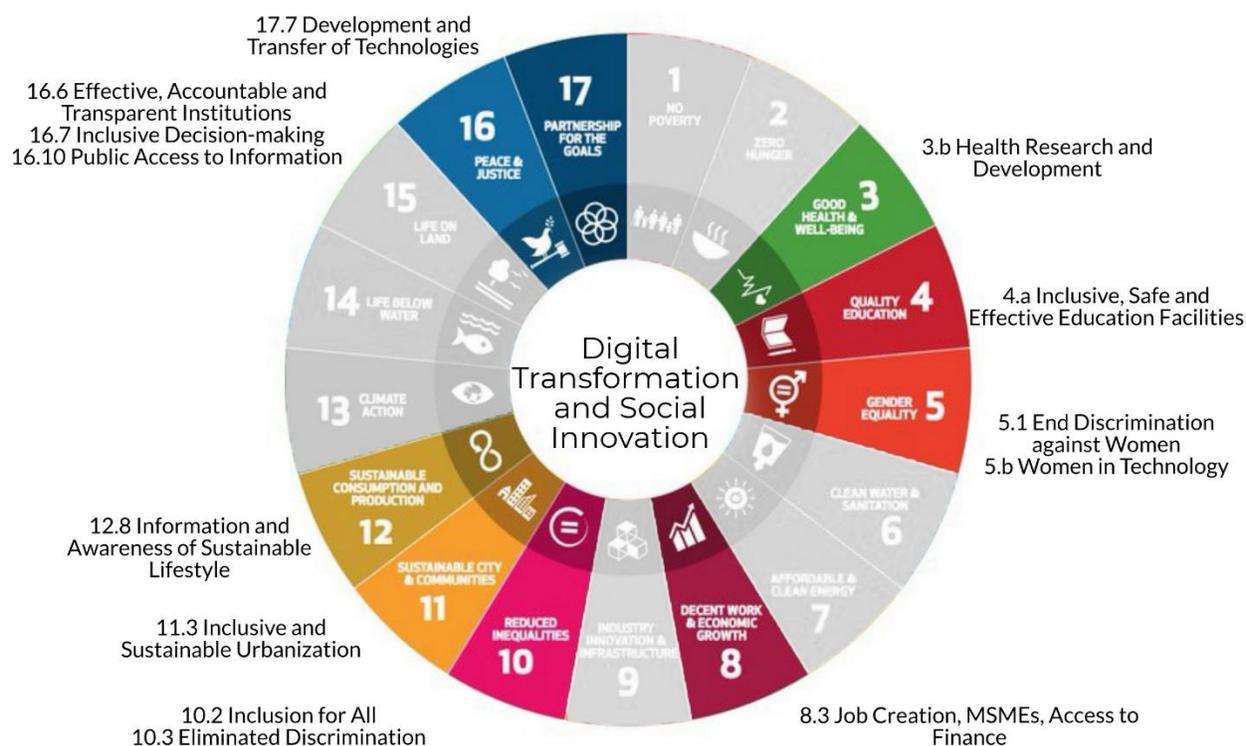
With the advent of new forms of technology and media, youth are demanding greater access to meaningful decision-making fora, and to data and information that can help them to make better decisions in their lives in a rapidly changing environment. Creating an environment that promotes youth engagement and participation in decision-making, including scaling current approaches such as youth parliaments,¹³ and developing youth-generated approaches to solving social issues in health, labour, environment, mobility and others, particularly through the use of data and new technologies, has multiple primary and secondary benefits. These include solutions that are developed faster and more efficiently, better decisions by groups in society (for example, apps that map public transportation accessibility and options can contribute to lowering carbon footprint) and youth's own investment in the future of Belarusian society.

[WHO. Tackling non-communicable diseases. “Best buys” and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. 2017.](#)

¹² In Belarus, women are concentrated in education and economy service sectors particularly in humanitarian and social sciences, public health, social protection services, public catering, hotel and personal services. In subjects such as technology, science, economics, management and construction however, men dominate.

¹³ Since 2007, Belarus has established youth parliaments within the Child-Friendly Cities initiative. See Juraev, J. (2016), Assessment of Child Friendly City initiative (CFCI) Development in the Republic of Belarus, UNICEF.

Digital transformation and social innovation



Belarus enjoys improving rankings, relative to the region, in the use of electronic tools and information and communications technologies (ICT) across a range of metrics.¹⁴ In 2017, for example, it markedly increased its Ease of Doing Business ranking from the 129th to 37th in the World Bank Doing Business Report; one of the top-10 countries in making the biggest improvements in its business regulations. Development benefits from these positive trends, however, remain limited. Reaching the full potential of institutional and societal digital development would enable Belarus to move towards a service-, knowledge-, and innovation-based society and economy characterized by deeper integration into global value chains and a more competitive service sector. It would also strengthen the social contract by enabling more accessibility and active participation of the society in shaping the country's progress.

A focus on digital transformation requires changes in the legal and regulatory environment to incentivize efficiencies and reduce overlaps in governance and service delivery (e.g. e-governance, e-health and e-justice), including between central and local authorities, and the economic system (e.g. e-finance, e-tax, e-procurement, e-tendering) that would enable effective and productive government policy making,

¹⁴ Belarus is 32 globally in the [ICT Development Index](#), 2017, ITU and 49th of 93 countries in 2016 in the [UN E-Government Knowledge Database](#). At the same time, Belarus ranks below the Eastern European average in e-participation.

state and private business, and public and financial services. Achieving efficiencies in state and municipally-owned enterprises, particularly in the manufacturing sector, through digitalization and use of ICT should be a priority. At the same time, the state needs to ensure that privacy and security in digital development is properly considered in policy and practice, and that effective means are in place to protect confidential information and identities of individuals represented in data sets from unauthorized access and manipulation.¹⁵



New digital technologies engage youth in a healthy lifestyle. (Photo: UNDP Belarus)

To be effective in benefiting the population and private sector business, e-services need to be designed with the end-user in mind using human-centred design techniques, particularly with respect to vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities. Digital platforms and new technologies have particular potential to inform people about their health (e.g. health literacy), the environment, the law, social initiatives and to enable

persons with disabilities to participate more fully in public life and engage in productive employment. Accessibility, transparency and openness (e.g. open data, open budgets, open contracting, open justice), promotion of digital equality across gender and other divides, and citizen feedback to measure responsiveness and performance (e-participation) are critical to incentivizing institutional quality, constructive participation and maximizing efficiencies, as well as generating public and investor trust in government and the economy. Digital infrastructure investments will not yield the returns expected otherwise.

Technology and innovation should go hand-in-hand. This platform seeks to further enable the exploration of innovations, particularly those intended for social good, for implementing SDG acceleration in Belarus. Building the foundation for innovation involves creating space, including civic space, and incentives for prototyping, experimenting and new forms of R&D. With putting this foundation in place, Belarus has the human and infrastructure capacities to make the most of many innovative methods, such as behavioural insights, use of new forms of and big data, system's thinking, and alternative finance techniques like crowd-funding and peer-to-peer lending.

¹⁵ Digital Principles for Development (<https://digitalprinciples.org/principles>); Belarus [Strategy for Development of Digital Economy and Information Society 2016-2020](#).

Gender equitable society



Belarus ranks high in many metrics on gender equality. The high standing can be explained by gender parity in education; a constantly improving health status of women, including reproductive health; high level of female participation in the labour force; and increasing women's participation in decision-making. Simultaneously, like many neighbouring and similarly situated countries, a fertility decline (coupled with relatively high mortality particularly among men) has become an area of concern for the government. The perceived and real tensions between promoting gender equality in the society on the one hand, and persistent patriarchal views and stereotypes, and pro-natalist policies on the other, pose a challenge for reaching the SDGs.

This platform aims at going the last mile to reach a gender equitable society in Belarus. It requires tackling the key remaining barriers experienced by women and girls in particular, so as to unleash their full potential to contribute to the country's sustainable development. Remaining barriers are interconnected, for example, the gender wage gap – influenced by both vertical and horizontal segregation – and the gender gap in unpaid work. Women in Belarus experience an up to 25 per cent wage gap compared to men mostly due to concentration in lower or middle level positions and less number of working hours, which are linked to gender defined career choices and disruptions. These are reflected in the fact that women spend daily on average twice as much unpaid time as men on household and caring for children, the ill and

the elderly in Belarus. In politically or economically high-level positions the prevalence of women falls precipitously.¹⁶

A robust policy mix package is needed that aims to expand – rather than reduce based on traditional roles – women’s economic opportunities, while also improving the quality of life of families. The package includes creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs (particularly in sectors where women are underrepresented such as ICT and the green economy); positive workforce reintegration policies (training, vocational guidance, counselling and information and placement services); eliminating unequal treatment of men and women in the labour market; ensuring equal pay for work of equal value through wage transparency, training and gender neutral job evaluation methods; and taking affirmative measures to promote women to high-ranking positions in government, management and other spheres. It also requires family and related labour policies that lower women’s opportunity costs of parenting: high quality childcare for children of all ages complemented with flexible parental leave schemes (maternal, paternal – non-transferrable and highly paid- and parental leave), flexible working time schedules and family friendly working time, promoting and normalizing good quality part-time work, accompanied with awareness-raising and incentives for men to get involved in care provision and sharing of family responsibilities. At the core of the package must be the guarantee of a robust social protection system to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work through quality social services and social security benefits.



Enabling women entrepreneurs paves the way to a more gender equitable society. (Photo: UNDP Belarus)

¹⁶ Belstat: [Digest. Women and Men in the Republic of Belarus, 2016](#); [Gender Global Gaps Report 2017](#).

Women and girls in Belarus are particularly affected by sexual abuse and domestic violence. Official data of registered offences and crimes combined with national survey data show a disturbing picture. For example, in a 2014 survey 83.2% of female respondents experienced at least once in their life domestic violence (one of three types – physical, sexual or psychological violence).¹⁷ Risks related to sexual and gender-based violence are higher among minority groups, such as refugees, stateless persons, and migrants, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

While Belarus is taking steps to address this substantial challenge, there is much more to be done to put in place the society-wide effective, comprehensive and coordinated measures needed to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG). These measures consist of: review and revision of existing legislation addressing different forms of VAWG to align with international law and best practice and introduce comprehensive legislation and regulatory frameworks that provide for victims' support and accountability of perpetrators; allocating human resources and finances required to build and sustain sector-wide (health, social, justice, police) and integrated coordinated system to provide quality essential services;¹⁸ ensuring training and workforce development for sector agencies and the coordination mechanism to deliver quality services, through monitoring and evaluation to feed continuous improvement; and the regular collection, communication and analysis of comprehensive statistical and qualitative data, disaggregated by sex, race, age, ethnicity and disability, on the causes, nature, prevalence and impact of all forms of VAWG in order to study its root causes and effects, incidences and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken.

Preventive measures are also needed to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour in Belarus which contribute to gender discrimination and VAWG. These should include systematic awareness-raising campaigns throughout the country addressing the underlying causes of VAWG; strengthening regulatory frameworks with regard to media, advertising imagery, texts, games and other popular culture mediums which portray women in a discriminatory, degrading or stereotypical way, or which glorify violent masculinities; and support for male advocates committed to non-violence, and high-profile people to promote messages of gender equality and non-violence in Belarus.

Finally, sexual harassment towards women and girls in the workplace or in educational institutions in Belarus has not been thoroughly studied, and there is a need to develop a confidential and safe mechanism for filing complaints on gender discrimination and sexual harassment at workplace or educational institutions and to provide the victims of the harassment with effective access to these remedies.

¹⁷ UNFPA EECARO: *Combating Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, 2015.

¹⁸ See [UN Joint Programme: Essential Services Package for Women and Girls subject to Violence](#).

Localizing the SDGs

Local communities and stakeholders, who know individual and collective needs and capacities best, are critical partners in implementing and realizing Agenda 2030. While regional inequalities in Belarus are relatively low and the country remains centrally governed, effective implementation of the accelerator platforms will vary by region and locality and thus require the capacities and resources to determine specific regional and local development trajectories. For this reason, localization of the SDGs in Belarus should be trialled as a cross-cutting approach to the acceleration platforms.

Many of the accelerator actions should be tailored and formulated at the regional and local levels, including the participation of local communities and civil society, to enable their full potential and to ensure no-one is left behind. For example, a green transition focused on growth in the eco-tourism will need to be region and locality specific and must involve all stakeholders spanning from the conservation, tourism and service sectors, including the growing number of private eco/agro-MSMEs (such as local farmers) and the local communities in order to be successful. The determinants of success in promoting European-wide eco-tourism in the Belovezha Pushcha could be substantially different than tourism development approaches in Belarus' eastern regions, which might involve services catering to cross-border trade with the Russian Federation. Such local participation and regional variation should produce development gains that in turn incentivize rural population groups to remain in the countryside.

At the same time, urbanization and rural to urban migration is continuing in the country involving all groups, but particularly young people. The majority of young people (84.1%) live in towns and cities, while 15.9% of the youth live in the rural areas.¹⁹ The future generation orientation, digital transformation and a green transition acceleration platform provides a guide for sustainable urbanization in Belarus through integrated SMART, green cities that afford populations a healthy and accessible living environment and access to opportunities. The Roadmap thus suggests piloting an approach of localization of the SDGs which includes enabling the space within current



A future-oriented, digital and green transformation provides a guide for sustainable urbanization. (Photo: UNDP Belarus)

¹⁹ [Country sheet on Youth Policy in Belarus](#), commissioned by the Youth Partnership of the European Union and the Council of Europe, Nov 2016.

Belarus' sub-national planning for alignment of the SDG targets and indicators in a specific region and evaluating the process and impact.

Nationalization of the SDGs

The formulation of the 2035 National Sustainable Development Strategy provides an opportunity to promote a comprehensive vision of sustainable development including all efforts that contribute to the realization of the SDGs in Belarus. An assessment of the 2030 Strategy and state programmes show gaps in alignment with the SDGs, particularly related to SDG 5 (Gender), SDG 13 (Climate Change), SDG 14 (Oceans), SDG 16 (peaceful, just and inclusive societies), and SDG 17 (partnerships).²⁰ A new strategic planning process has the potential to strengthen risk informed development, through an analysis of the main risks that could affect the realization of the SDGs in Belarus until 2030.

Belarus has a particularly strong vertical planning process, and has introduced state programmes based on programme based budgeting principles, which also assist with greater horizontal planning. At the same time, in all of the SDG accelerator platform areas, Belarus has developed a range of strategies, state programmes, projects, policies and actions plans which touch on various aspects of the issues and can in some cases be inconsistent. The planning process linked to a new 2035 Strategy should help streamline strategies, action plans and programmes into holistic, coherent and consistent plans that can be clearly monitored and evaluated. Fragmentation in the current planning processes, often linked to challenges with inter-ministerial collaboration, is a key barrier to effective implementation.

Finally, the SDGs will not be achieved through government action alone. A high level of civil society and private sector awareness and desire for engagement in realizing the SDGs exists in Belarus. Public consultations and MY World type surveys around the formulation of Strategy 2035, related plans and programmes, and their implementation could help strengthen the commitment of the whole society to implement Agenda 2030 in Belarus.

Financing for development and Partnerships

As an upper middle-income country, the government budget is likely to be the most important source of SDG financing for Belarus. In Belarus in particular, net Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows have been quite small relative to government budget revenues, net foreign direct investment (FDI) and remittance flows. This

²⁰ RIA of 2030 Strategy and 21 State Programmes resulted in the findings of coverage: SDG 5 Gender: 1 out of 9 targets = 11%, SDG 13 Climate change: 1 out of 5 targets = 20%, SDG 14 Oceans: 0 out of 10 targets = 0% (relevant for Belarus, in terms of managing overfishing and regulating water ecosystems), SDG 16 Peaceful and inclusive societies: 2 out of 12 targets = 17%, SDG 17 Partnerships: 2 out of 19 targets = 11%.

places a premium on prospects for accelerating sustainable economic growth and thereby budget revenues, as well as on stepping up public finance reforms.

Belarus has put in place an ambitious reform programme to enhance long-term stability and sustainability of the budget system and improve the quality of public finance management. Beyond this reform, contingent liabilities and fiscal risks associated with the large stock of quasi-fiscal debt under government-directed lending in the banking sector requires attention to achieve a prudent fiscal position. Further, significant gains in national development financing could come from closer state supervision of trade pricing and finance, if inspection of data showing large “misinvoiced trade flows” (a form of illicit financial flows) present in Belarus are accurate.²¹ These measures and the vast and complex PMF reform are essential to increase budget revenues, based on improved efficiency of public spending and instruments for strategic reallocation of resources, to help finance the SDGs in Belarus.

The design of the new Strategy 2035 provides an opportunity to include the estimation of the financial costs of meeting the SDGs. Building on this, Belarus should develop an overall financing framework to better utilize and track budget and expenditure and to harness more efficient use of resources and investments in reaching the SDGs. This should include progressively drawing on alternative forms of financing particularly from private sector, including an SDG social impact fund, improving the environment for FDI, and harnessing climate finance.

Moving forward many dimensions of the accelerator platforms and financing of the SDGs will also depend on the extent and nature of Belarus’ partnerships. The positive trend of increasing multi-dimensional bilateral, regional and global engagement should be deepened as the country seeks to implement the SDGs. Further efforts to secure membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) would open prospects for deeper gains from participation in supra-national value chains —particularly in terms of helping Belarus’ strong ICT position translate into more (and higher value-added) manufacturing and service exports – are warranted. Engagement to address major cross border challenges and global trends collaboratively is critical, such as climate change, where Belarus has the potential to be a net positive contributor and is closely impacted by the action of others.

²¹ The numbers in the report are drawn from IMF data, and from estimates of “misinvoiced trade flows” produced by the [Global Financial Integrity](#) (GFI) Initiative. See UNDP, [Regional Human Development Report 2016 Progress at Risk: Inequalities and Human Development in Eastern Europe, Turkey, and Central Asia](#).

Monitoring and Reporting

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that each country decides how the aspirational and global targets of the SDGs are to be incorporated into national planning. A well-defined process is needed to prepare national indicators; the national statistics office leads a process of consultation to define the national indicator framework with all stakeholders, including planners and policy makers representing all relevant ministries in the government, the UN country team, the civil society, and other



Energy-efficiency is key to achieving Belarus' commitment to the Paris Accord. (Photo: UNDP Belarus)

stakeholders, such as private institutions. Eventually, the list should be a subset of the indicators contained in the global SDG indicator framework complemented with indicators reflecting specific national development policies and objectives.

The National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat) is following a similar approach to establish the national indicator framework. The current list, still in refinement, is available on the website of Belstat with information on adopted metadata and national custodian agencies. From the 219 indicators identified as relevant, 134 can be already compiled, out of them 74 by Belstat and the others by various ministries and agencies. Belstat plans to introduce the national SDG data monitoring and reporting portal by the end of 2018.

The national indicator framework consists mainly of a subset of the global framework with some adaptations (proxy) for indicators that do not have a compilation methodology and for which data are currently not available in Belarus. In the framework of the further refinement and improvement of the national indicator set, it is suggested to assess if some national development aims that are not reflected in the global framework might deserve the definition of specific indicators, in particular for the monitoring of targets related to SDG accelerators.

A key challenge in the SDG monitoring framework is the requirement for disaggregated data. The overall organisational structure of Belstat still reflects statistical production processes based on exhaustive (complete) data collection (state statistical reports) at the territorial level and the final aggregation, validation, and dissemination of the statistical information at the national level. Administrative data are often collected manually on paper forms at the lowest sub-national level and then successively aggregated up to the national level. Such structure and processes, similar to data collected through exhaustive survey, reduces the “granularity” of the data and is a major impediment for the compilation of disaggregated SDG indicators.

While much of the official data in Belarus is disaggregated at regional level, further disaggregation to municipal level is needed to identify issues of exclusion and pockets of poverty. Disaggregated data on socio-economic vulnerabilities linked to gender, age, disability and health status, and migration patterns is required to ensure no one is left behind.

For these reasons, the efforts by Belstat to improve production processes and organizational structure along with modernisation of the IT infrastructure and the development of new methods of data collection require further investment and support. Priority should be given to the transition to electronic data reporting, the use of sample surveys and administrative data, and the introduction of the Single Information System of State Statistics as part of integrated e-government. In that context, all up-coming surveys (Disability Survey 2018, MICS 2018, PISA2018, Census2019, Time-use2020) should aim at identifying the statistics and indicators that could be compiled through administrative data sources (secondary data) after assessing the quality/methodology and potential for disaggregation and be led or coordinated by Belstat to ensure quality and increase capacity. Belstat is also planning to introduce some surveys among the population in SDG related implementation, such as public opinion on domestic violence. Progressively increasing initiatives to innovate and gather new forms of data in Belarus should be a key aim, while ensuring quality data is available in open data formats easily accessible to all, to track SDG progress until 2030.